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BY

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The Song of Mingling flows,
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  As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose. . . .

Nothing that asks for bliss,
  Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
  And half of the world a bride.

WILLIAM WATSON, *Ode in May.*

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PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

The demand for yet another edition of WISE WEDLOCK, following so quickly upon the appearance of its predecessor, is, of course, equally gratifying to the author and publishers; the latter, who were the pioneers of books on sex questions, combining perfect candour with perfect wholesomeness, may be reasonably proud of the success which has attended this, as so many of their previous ventures, believing as they do that there are few public services of greater importance than to spread what is truly "saving knowledge" on the most vital of all human relationships.

From the first, the success of WISE WEDLOCK was never in doubt; and the expressions of appreciation which have reached the author from readers who in these chapters found for the first time a frank statement of truths which it concerned them most intimately to know, would fill many pages.

The writer takes this opportunity of thanking those who have written to him from far and near to bear their cordial testimony to the practical benefit they have derived from the perusal of this "Book of Counsel and Instruction." He earnestly hopes that wherever this new edition or its successors are read, his work will prove a means of preventing the manifold unhappiness which so largely springs from ignorance, and promote human wellbeing and harmony within the bonds of marriage.

He must needs say a word on the subject of the WISE WEDLOCK ADVISORY BUREAU, which it was found necessary to establish when questions on personal problems began to pour in. This very responsible task

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has been gladly undertaken and diligently discharged with what the author has reason to know the happiest results, and all such questions will continue to receive his careful and sympathetic attention. Let one typical and quite unsought expression of appreciation be here recorded: "I cannot thank you enough," writes a lady who had previously written on a peculiarly delicate subject. "You have so wonderfully 'understood,' and put the matter before my future son-in-law in so exactly the right way and spirit. Indeed, I think many young families will 'arise and call you blessed,' for, as you say, so many homes would be happier if young parents had been helped to think out these important things." Such a letter is a welcome acknowledgment of the value of work which cannot but make heavy demands on time and thought.

The campaign against the age-long "conspiracy of silence"—a campaign waged so persistently in the columns of *Health & Efficiency* and through the widely-circulating "Life and Race" Books issued by the present publishers—is beginning to bear fruit. Against all the advocates of the policy of hush-up and concealment, against all who believe that questions of sex must be either ignored or left in semi-darkness as an unhallowed mystery, we hold to the ancient words which declare that "light is sown for the upright"—and results are justifying our creed.

In conclusion, the author may be allowed to refer to his forthcoming work, THE REALITIES OF MARRIAGE. This will be found to deal with many aspects of the subject which went beyond the scope of the present volume. May the new book meet with the same generous welcome as WISE WEDLOCK, and may both help in making marriage the happy and holy estate it ought to be.

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"As long as we are what we are, you'll never rid love of a certaln amount of difficulty, or even suffering; but you *can* rid the world of very many artificial and quite unnecessary tragedies."

MILES MALLESON, *Youth.*

CHAPTER I.

WANTED—A SANE OUTLOOK.

> Our current civilisation is a sexual lunatic. And it has lost its reason in this respect largely through the difficulties that stand in the way of any sane discussion of the matter as a whole. To approach it is to approach excitement. So few people seem to lead happy and healthy sexual lives that to mention the very word "sexual" is to set them stirring, to brighten the eye, lower the voice, and blanch or flush the cheek with a flavour of guilt. We are all as it were keeping our secrets and hiding our shames.
>
> H. G. WELLS.

In these trenchant words one of the most penetrating observers and brilliant thinkers of our age frames what amounts to a very grave indictment against our civilisation; nor will any thoughtful and truthful person dissent from that indictment as unfounded or inaccurate in substance. There is no more vitally important subject to either the individual or the race—no need, save only hunger, more imperative in its sway—than the subject of sex, the need which finds its normal fulfilment in marriage; yet in this field of all others it cannot be said that civilised mankind has ordered its affairs with conspicuous or even moderate wisdom. And from this unwisdom has sprung such a harvest of unhappiness as must surely move any lover of his fellows to pity.

Before there can be any hope of this unhappiness being removed, we shall have to acquire a sane outlook on sex, discarding a mass of false and mischievous notions that surround the subject; and in particular the indispensable condition of married happiness, of Wise

Wedlock, must be a resolute readjustment of many of the current and conventional views on the sex question. Only wise, enlightened men and women can achieve Wise Wedlock in the full meaning of the term; and it is because we desire to help others to attain a consummation so devoutly to be wished—and because we are convinced that the highest human instincts will be content with nothing short of permanent union between one man and one woman—that we are embarking on our present responsible task.

Our object is to promote that complete and lasting happiness in the marriage relationship which is so much rarer than it might and should be: so to instruct and guide our readers that their married life may not merely avoid failure and tragedy, but rise above the all too common level of the second-best. That we are able to render this help to those who will read the following pages carefully and intelligently, and act on the advice we have to give, is our emphatic conviction.

We are quite certain that the average man or woman—especially among the thinking and educated strata of society—who enters matrimony does so in a temper of genuine idealism; that such men and women enter it indeed as a Promised Land, intensely and devoutly hoping to give and gain a felicity which the single state has not to bestow. With so much real kindliness as is the attribute of our common humanity, with so much mutual affection as leads youth and maiden to plight their troth, how is it that these hopes are in so many instances left unrealised, insomuch that an innumerable army of disillusioned husbands and wives might take up the old plaint and say: "That which was unto life, this I found to be unto death"—the death of happiness, of hope, of love itself?

We find the answer to this question simply in that

lack of sanity in the general outlook upon sex to which we have already referred, together with that ignorance of fundamental facts pertaining to sex which is so lamentably common; and in the spirit of the saying which declares that that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural—then that which is spiritual —we must set ourselves before everything else to deal quite candidly with those natural facts which lie at the root of the whole matter.

The spiritual side of marriage, in which we profoundly believe, will never so much as have a chance to develop while the natural side is out of gear. The problem of two people achieving anything like perfect harmony in the most complex as well as the closest of all relationships will never be an easy one to solve; but we can at least remove a hundred and one unnecessary stumbling-blocks, warn against unseen snares and pitfalls, prevent misunderstandings that are the fruitful causes of manifold misery, and generally make rough places plain. When Dr. William Lee Howard tells us that "*the physician knows that the cause*"—*i.e.*, of marital disharmony and divorce—"*is almost invariably sexual discontent,*" he pronounces a dictum which should give us much to think.

If a subject which affects every individual so deeply and directly, which occupies so much of human thought and imagination, is nevertheless so much misunderstood, the reason is to be sought in the suppression of its frank discussion, which until lately was all but universally practised in middle and upper class society in this country; and this suppression sprang, in turn, from a deep-seated conviction that sex was something to be ashamed of, an unclean thing, and as such to be banished from speech, driven underground, or where that proved impracticable, to be passed by with averted

glances. Sex has been surrounded with associations of the forbidden, the unholy, the physically and morally nasty, so much so that the sex-function bears, to the average mind, the marks of a pleasurable indecency, a naughty indulgence; it requires no very exceptional acuteness to perceive that such a view was bound to produce deplorable reactions upon the marriage relationship, in so far as it is essentially a sex-relationship. So powerful have these associations proved, as to make anything like a frank treatment of this subject exceedingly difficult. Brought up as we have been, it is at best an "embarrassing" topic, and its mention has to be apologised for. It is as if the very walls of a temple had been covered with lewd inscriptions, and the avenues leading to the sanctuary choked up with dirt.

For, of course, an instinct on which the transmission of life itself depends was altogether too powerful to be simply exorcised or silenced, except officially. If the facts of sex could not be discussed soberly and healthily, they could nevertheless be discussed secretly and guiltily, with the sense of morbid fascination which everywhere attaches to the "banned" topic. If sex was a thing of shame anyhow, there was all the less reason why it should not furnish the theme for a thousand disgusting jests and leering innuendoes. ("How is it," asks a character in a modern work of fiction, "that men are never tired of vulgarising that to which they owe their very existence?") Above all, if this imperious need could not be satisfied without a sense of innocence forfeited, satisfied it nevertheless must and would be with a sort of furtive defiance. For if, as we have been told, love is strong as death, the sex-instinct, which is the foundation of love, is strong as Life, and as ineradicable.

But—and this is the tragedy of it all—if we allow ourselves to have vile and degraded conceptions of sex,

we shall reap the reward in a degraded sex-life, for practice will not rise above theory. Let it here be said in passing that *any* normal function could be made to appear unclean by the steady pressure of suggestion, or the enactments of social custom, as may be abundantly verified by a study of the taboos of savage tribes. If, *e.g.*, the idea had been inculcated generation after generation that there was something to be ashamed of, something disgusting, about the processes of nutrition, people would be quite genuinely ashamed of these physical promptings and their satisfaction, snatch their meals behind locked doors and drawn blinds, never refer to the topic of food except in the closest domestic circle, and regard the very thought of a public dinner with sincere abhorrence, as a practice conceivable only in a morally abandoned society.

But how has it come about that while the craving for food and its appeasement are regarded without shrinking or aversion, the sex-hunger—as universal and almost as compelling—should be viewed with very different feelings, so much so that its complete inhibition is widely regarded as meritorious, and its very existence as an unfortunate "blot in the 'scutcheon" of humanity? It is not enough to say that this represents man's revolt against his animal inheritance, for man's need of nutriment is no less part of that inheritance, proclaims his kinship with the animal creation no less than his sexual needs. What seems to have happened is rather that as man became civilised, and in civilisation more erotic than his animal forbears, he also became perplexed by and afraid of an impulse fraught with terrific potentialities for evil as well as for good; an impulse capable of producing tremendous explosions in the field of the emotions, and liable, moreover, to grievous abuse, with all the consequences, both physical and moral, which follow in the wake of excessive in-

dulgence.* From this followed the inference that this dangerous impulse was in itself evil rather than good; that its inhibition rather than its satisfaction was to be desired; and that a passion which could lead and had led men to disgraceful and deplorable acts was itself deplorable and disgraceful in essence. It was not a very logical inference; but mankind is seldom guided by exact logic.

This attitude towards sex, which led men to regard it as a fact to be as far as possible ignored, concealed or apologised for, was no doubt one of gradual growth in the history of civilisation; unquestionably, however, that attitude was intensified and its growth accelerated by the rise and influence of the Church. Almost from the first there had been a strong element of asceticism in the Church's teaching and practice, a fact largely due to a reaction against the shocking licence characteristic of paganism, with its immoral cults and rites. As paganism exalted unrestrained sex-indulgence, so the Church exalted sexual continence, set virginity on a pinnacle, declared celibacy to be the ideal state, and hence tended to regard marriage merely as a lesser good than continence, a lesser evil than vice—in fine, a concession to human infirmity; sexual intercourse within the bonds of matri-

* We said that man, under civilisation, has become more erotic than his sub-human ancestors; it is equally true that civilised man is more erotic than most savage tribes, nor is this a sign of decadence. For civilised man is driven to reflect upon himself and his desires, he develops the power of looking before and after, and his imaginative powers grow by leaps and bounds; it is natural and inevitable that in the mind of such a being sex should occupy a far larger place than in that of the brute or the savage, and what is true of his mind is true of his general scheme of life. Poetry, fiction, drama, the fine arts, all combine to stimulate the sex-instinct, the modern play and novel having almost invariably a love-interest; which explains the deep-seated hostility of every kind of Puritanism towards art and literature, owing to their undoubted tendency to awaken and even glorify promptings which the Puritan honestly looks upon as shameful and soul-imperilling.

mony was, in this official and ecclesiastical view, strictly permissible only when its express object was the procreation of children—apart from that object it was at the best a "venial" sin, *i.e.*, an act requiring some expiation.

The sincerest respect is unquestionably due to those who, in the depth of their abhorrence of a society given over to unbridled and in part unnatural lusts, proceeded to proclaim the sinfulness of the very instinct which had given birth to such evils and scandals as flourished in pagan society—things of which it was a shame even to speak, vile passions full of uncleanness. It may even be argued, and that with a good deal of force, that but for such a root-and-branch protest, with its unrelenting rigour, the social organism itself must have perished, and that desperate diseases require desperate remedies.

All this may well be true; nevertheless, in taking up this condemnatory attitude towards the sex-instinct as such, and not merely towards its abuse, the Church had gone from one extreme to its opposite—and truth is not wont to reside in extremes. Rather had a fatal error been made, as such errors are generally made, *i.e.*, with the best intentions. There is no disguising the fact that it was ascetic ecclesiasticism, heaping opprobrium upon sex-needs and sex-functions, systematically deprecating normal life as less pleasing to God than the life of mortification, as practised by the celibate priest or nun—it was this which originated that policy of suppression, that conspiracy of silence, that making unclean of things clean and wholesome in themselves, which eventually turned our current civilisation into what Mr. Wells calls "a sexual lunatic."*

* It is nothing against this conclusion that the same attitude has flourished in—has even been peculiarly characteristic of—Protestant communities and countries; Puritanism simply took over and carried on an anti-erotic tradition which had been developed in pre-Reformation days, and which it found congenial to its own temper.

Now the sexual lunacy of society constitutes so serious a menace to human wellbeing, it has been the prolific source of so many ills, that few things are more urgently needed to-day than the inauguration of the reign of sexual sanity; and for the commencement of that reign the first pre-requisite is that we divest sex in our thoughts for good and all of all those associations of uncleanness with which it has been besmirched these many centuries past. We need to recognise that these urgencies implanted in our being are in no wise vile or the mark of degradation, but on the contrary are pure in essence and sacred in purpose. We have to accustom ourselves to the truth that sexual union—however it may be desecrated by commercial vice and promiscuity—is between wedded lovers a beautiful thing, a veritable sacrament; we must learn to view it as an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace, consummated and renewed in the love-act which makes husband and wife not merely one flesh but one spirit. We must, in a word, have the courage to feel and declare that the joy mutually given and received in that act is to be gloried in and given thanks for as good, not to be furtively snatched and half-disavowed as lowering to our dignity as men and women.

When we have so purified the atmosphere—and each of us can help so to purify the mental and moral atmosphere he himself in part creates—we shall take the next step by pressing for the fullest knowledge of all that pertains to this vitally important subject; knowledge which we shall no longer believe to be a stain on our imaginations, any more than we shall continue to dignify ignorance by the name of innocence. If it is criminal and dangerous ignorantly to handle complex and powerful machinery, what description shall we give of the folly of ignorantly handling the highly complex engines of sex, the function which, of all others, sends

its reactions through all the ramifications of body, mind and spirit? Knowledge has its perils—granted: but they are as nothing compared to the perils of ignorance; not ignorance but knowledge is the safeguard of purity, either physical or moral. Frankness has its risks—admitted: but they are not to be compared with the risks of concealment; for the truth which might have come into view as a glorious apparition, if freely welcomed, has a way of avenging herself on her would-be suppressors by taking on the guise of an evil spectre, full of vile suggestion. Speech has its hazards—true, but they are not so deadly as those which beset the mistaken policy of silence, which paints the chambers of the mind with unsubstantial terrors or foul imaginings. *We must know.* Such knowledge, once gained, is not at all incompatible with a proper reticence; but it will be the reticence we instinctively observe in regard to holy, not to guilty, things.

In a very real sense the civilised world of to-day is "waiting for the redemption of the body," *i.e.*, its redemption from the ignorant reproach and unmerited obloquy under which it has fallen, with disastrous results to humanity. For the purpose of effecting that redemption we must not tire of repeating that neither the body nor any instinct thereof is unclean, and that least of all can the reproach of uncleanness attach to the instinct which knits man and woman together in true marriage, and kindles anew the sacred spark of life. Once this has been understood and thoroughly accepted as a root-conviction—but not till then—mankind will be able to build the shrine of Wise Wedlock, wherein the worshippers shall offer ever-new and pure oblations of sincere thanksgiving and unfading joy.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE.

Marriage has been described by a wit as the voyage for the unknown with the unknown; and there is at any rate enough of truth in the epigram to commend it to our attention.

For observe, to begin with, that once the vessel has weighed anchor, it is no longer open to either of the two passengers to think better of the adventure, or ask to be set ashore again after some brief trial; come what kind of weather may, and like or loathe—or merely tolerate—each other's company, together they must continue to plough the waves, and short of exceptional and drastic measures, remedies of despair, the port of death alone will give release to those who have "signed on" for the long trip of wedded life. Yet the gay carelessness with which every day such voyagers set out in their little flower-decked barques amid the cheers and felicitations of their friends would suggest that they were starting on a mere pleasure-cruise, with a sure prospect of none but halcyon days in store for them: a spectacle not to be beheld without wistful wonder at the lack of wisdom which men and women apply to the most important decision in their whole lives—for John Lyly's words remain true, which declare that "marriage is destinie."

Considering, indeed, how largely unknown to each other the majority of these voyagers *à deux* must needs be when their ship leaves harbour, the relative success achieved by so many marriages, even among those that

have been somewhat light-heartedly contracted, speaks well for average human nature. But for the large part played by kindliness and goodwill, self-control and adaptability, there must surely be a much greater proportion of failures; while, no doubt, beneficent social pressure prevents many a precipitate disruption which, once accomplished, might prove irremediable. When we remember how many facts concerning each other's natures will disclose themselves to our fellow-travellers only in the course of time, maybe in the course of years; how many are the unforeseen and unforeseeable developments of mind and character which the years produce in most of us, we shall perhaps be pleasurably surprised to find how few, after all, make manifest and irreparable shipwreck on such a voyage. Even in the United States, where the obstacles to the dissolution of unhappy unions are so much less formidable than in our own country, we read that "only one marriage in nine is visibly wrecked on the rocks of shattered hopes and vanished love."

That, of course, does not tell us what proportion among those vessels which have escaped unmistakable disaster carry anything like true married happiness on board. What we do know is that an appalling number of marriages fall far short of achieving any such consummation. Apart from many merely negatively "comfortable" couples, who just "rub along" together without perceptible friction, there are those—and their name is legion—who, having found out what they consider each other's unsatisfactory qualities, yet prefer a secret dissatisfaction to an open breach, and even contrive in many instances to keep up a very fair and deceptive outward appearance of marital harmony. And when all deductions have been made, there remains a vast irreducible stratum of undisguised and undisguisable married wretchedness, the compulsory

continuation of which strikes one as more disastrous, more profoundly immoral, than the laxest divorce laws could possibly be. And at the root—not, indeed, of all, but of most—of this sheer misery we shall discover *ignorance:* ignorance of human nature, ignorance of psychological and physiological facts, criminally fostered by that policy of concealment which, as we saw in the opening chapter, rests on the misconception of sex as impure and of our bodies as "vile."

Now ignorance may be avoidable or unavoidable, pardonable or unpardonable—it may even have desirable as well as undesirable aspects. None but God could bear to know the end from the beginning; for mortals, a life without the element of surprise would be intolerable. Hence, that the beloved fellow-voyager should in many respects be still a book with seven seals at the outset, and the voyage itself full of incidents we cannot possibly forecast, is all to the good: many marriages sink into a dismal routine, just because husband and wife have exhausted—or think they have exhausted—each other's possibilities, and would as soon expect to surprise or be surprised at one another as they would expect to wake up some morning and find that one or both of them had changed the colour of their skins. But with nothing new on the marital horizon, the romance of married life is gone. If the voyage is to be glorious, an entrancing, soul-satisfying adventure, it must be first and last a voyage of discovery—two souls' discovery of each other, with ever-new prospects waiting to come in sight.

Nevertheless, where so many factors must inevitably be unknown at the time of starting, and even for a long time after, there is no excuse or justification for setting out on so fate-fraught an enterprise in a state of avoidable ignorance of essential things; and it is here that our civilisation, especially in the middle and upper

classes, has gone palpably and regrettably astray. It is true that knowledge without goodwill is impotent; but goodwill without knowledge is apt to be a sad blunderer. All human progress consists, in the last resort, in the elimination of the unknown and accidental by methods of forethought and foresight based on ampler and more accurate knowledge.

Now in a society so set about with conventions as ours, it is undeniable that the man and the girl who are about to enter into the most binding of all contracts know as a rule quite alarmingly little of each other—far less than would give any reasonable guarantee of their future accord. How could it be otherwise? During the period of courtship, and even during their formal engagement, they have seen each other only at their mutual best, under somewhat artificial conditions, and intent on pleasing each other rather than on being themselves. They meet at intervals—frequently, yet still only at intervals—brightly attired and bright of mien, exchanging loving smiles and occasional tender pressures, while their second-best clothes and second-best tempers—(they have both!)—are kept carefully out of sight. They are not deliberately deceiving each other, like the pitiable couple in Brieux's "Three Daughters of M. Dupont"; and yet they will to some extent be mutually deceived by their very eagerness to produce and carry away a favourable impression.

Whence this eagerness? Because, to quote Edward Carpenter, "that there should exist one other person in the world between whom and oneself there should be a spontaneous rebound of sympathy in all the joys and sorrows and experiences of life—such is perhaps one of the dearest wishes of the soul"; and our two lovers verily believe that wish to have come true for them. But this very will-to-believe, which makes each of them charming to the other, is also liable to mislead them, to

blind them to symptoms which a more objective judgment would regard as in the nature of warnings. And when the time comes for them to see each other more often in every-day than in festal attire, when the mere glamour of early wedded bliss—supposing it to have existed—has begun to fade, and conversation no longer consists predominantly of an exchange of fond endearments, those same disregarded symptoms are apt to loom surprisingly and menacingly large. Our lovers are now securely tied, they see each other more as they are and less as fancy had painted them to one another; illusion, maybe, is succeeded by disillusion, and they settle down, disenchanted, to "make the best"—the second-best—of things. In his or her inmost heart each harbours a certain resentment, irrationally directed against the other: the bargain has not turned out as anticipated—they had dreamed of something so different, and this is the reality!

The truth is these young people never had a chance of learning sufficient concerning each other to have any reason for feeling sure that they would prove good yokefellows. There is a great deal to be said, in our opinion, for the practice which largely obtains in the industrial classes in some parts of our country, and which sanctions the spending of holidays together by engaged couples. No harm is anticipated, and none ensues, between these young folk of wholesome natures and sturdy self-respect; and yet that fortnight away from "her" people and "his" people, during which they have been in each other's company from morning till night, will have taught them more and shown them more of each other than they could have learned in two years' conventional engagement. It is what Mr. Arnold Bennett calls the "dailiness," the continual presence of the other, that tells; and if the short period at the seaside or the Lakes has been marked by a succession of thunderstorms and

hurricanes, *i.e.*, if tempers have jarred and clashed disagreeably, the contemplated marriage will probably not take place, and much unhappiness be saved. Short of the system of experimental marriages which is still said to prevail in Iceland—and which no one, of course, would dream of advocating for adoption nearer home—we know nothing better calculated to replace illusion by knowledge, and glamour by truth.

In view of the fact that this one step must involve the most far-reaching consequences for those who take it, and that it cannot be retraced at will, we cannot too strongly deprecate the inexcusable folly of two people binding themselves to each other for life on what so often amounts to no more than a superficial acquaintance. "Marry!" says the middle-aged, sharp-witted and sharp-tongued Gertrude Rhead in *Milestones*—"I could have chosen among a dozen men! But they were all the wrong men. Fancy pouring out tea every day of your life to the wrong man; every breakfast time; every afternoon! And there he sits, and nothing will move him." To which it may and must be added quite bluntly that married life implies intimacies quite other than those of the breakfast or the tea table; intimacies the very thought of which, as coming from "the wrong man," cannot but revolt the imagination, while the reality means as a rule, for the woman, a nauseated and shameful acquiescence.

Having said so much, we now desire to lay it down quite axiomatically that the first and indispensable condition of Wise Wedlock—of that ideal marriage which might be so far less rare a phenomenon than is avowedly the case—is the presence on both sides of a strong and unmistakable sex-attraction. Without this the happiest union is frankly impossible. We have become so artificial and conventional in our outlook that this elementary fact is either not understood at all or deliberately dis-

regarded, because it does not square with our notions of spurious refinement and mock-modesty. So true is this that a modern writer hits off the situation by saying, "Usually people marry for everything else in the world except love." Money, position, family reasons, vapid and snobbish social ambitions; anything, in fact, is mentioned as a sufficient argument why a man and a girl should marry, except the most essential reason of all —and then we are surprised at the number of marriages that turn out unsuccessfully. People talk of a "good match"; but a good match is one which instantaneously kindles fire and light, with a minimum of friction.

Marriage, whatever else and however much more it may be, is essentially sex-union, and such a union, if it is to prosper, must be based on sex-attraction. That, of course, is not the one sufficient condition, but it is the indispensable one, and nothing can compensate for its non-fulfilment. Given this foundation—the mating of two people who utterly desire one another—and we can at any rate feel that on it there may be built an enduring edifice of good comradeship, mutual faithfulness and sympathy; but failing this foundation, no other can take its place.*

That it should be necessary so to insist on what ought to be the merest truism shows how resolutely we have turned a deaf ear to nature's plain precepts, and the success which has unhappily attended our settled plan to ignore sex, as a subject not fit for mention in polite society. Hence we must repeat that it is untrue that full married happiness can be found apart from that complete physical satisfaction which has, as we shall see, its important psycho-emotional aspect; and that it

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* Cp. Edward Carpenter: "Intimacies founded on intellectual and moral affinities alone are seldom very deep and lasting; if the physical basis in any form is quite absent, the acquaintanceship is liable to die away again like an ill-rooted plant."

is simply futile to pretend that any two young people—provided they are heart-free and do not actually dislike each other—will be able to give each other that satisfaction, or that, once they are married, "love will come." That comfortable assumption, indeed, is only one step removed from the wisdom of the egregious Mrs. Malaprop, who declared that since preference and aversion both always wear off, "'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion."

But when we thus emphasise mutual sex-attraction as the first and fundamental necessity for Wise Wedlock, we do not overlook the record of the numberless notoriously unhappy marriages in which yet that condition was to all appearance abundantly fulfilled. This simply means that other and highly important elements that make for happiness were absent in one or both partners—elements such as mental and moral stability, approximate equality of station, harmony of general outlook and temperaments, etc., etc. If King Cophetua marries his Beggar Maid, the time will come when he will blush furiously for the table manners, the social *gaucheries* and conversational *gaffes* of his well-beloved, and there will be heart-burnings and recriminations; and if Reginald's passionate love for Hilda goes together with an ineradicable distaste for hard work and a *penchant* for backing horses, Hilda will be wise in refusing to tie herself for life to one whose affection will not prevent him from making her a thoroughly bad husband. Cophetua could have found some lady nearer his own rank, for whom he might have felt the same devotion; and as for Hilda—supposing what is hardly to be supposed, viz., that she could never experience for anyone else the ardent feeling inspired in her by the debonair and detrimental Reginald—the pangs of single unsatisfaction are more tolerable than those of married misery.

The one thing beyond doubt is that the man or woman who does *not* inspire that unmistakable sentiment in another, is for that other "the wrong man," "the wrong woman." They may have every other excellence, but nothing can make up for this one deficiency. Those who marry without having heard that imperative call may possibly meet in matrimony with kindliness, comfort, the satisfaction of the "home" instinct, and so forth, but they will inevitably miss the best thing of all. For the girl so married there are realms of ecstasy her feet will never tread, supreme and fathomless content she will never know; and yet an instinct, obscure but deeper than knowledge, will tell her that such content, such ecstasy, exists, and that somehow she has failed to enter by the right door—or, worst of all, she may meet the one who could have opened those realms for her when it is too late. We truly exact a terrific price for that mis-education of girls which for the most part consists in fending them off from reality, and in the deliberate repression of vital instincts which are quite wrongly judged to be unladylike, or even unwomanly. They are not; it is the girl afflicted, as so many are, with induced sex-anæsthesia who is unwomanly.

And here we come to one of the special difficulties of a subject sufficiently difficult in itself. In masculine humanity the sex-instinct, while controlled, has never been systematically stigmatised as "unmanly"; the result being that the average man is nearly always conscious of sex-attraction where it exists, even to the point of being carried off his feet by it—at any rate he "knows what he likes." But in feminine humanity the same instinct, by dint of long and severe repression, has been weakened to the extent of not declaring itself with anything like the same forcefulness until it has been aroused by sex-experience; and hence the English girl

of the middle and upper class is so often liable to be more strongly swayed by a possible suitor's worldly "prospects"—the style in which his income will allow her to dress, whether he belongs to the commercial or the professional ranks, and so on—than by the most important consideration of all, which has been studiously hidden from her, viz., *whether his manhood appeals to her womanhood.* It is her tragedy that she frequently wakens to that aspect of the matter only when her slumbering instincts have been stirred by marriage, and when she may find that marriage, to her, has not brought the supreme satisfaction for which her soul cries out as the thirsty land cries out for the rain, but rather has for ever precluded her from gaining that satisfaction. Hers the fate—and few fates hold more of bitterness and unappeased longing—of sharing all her life the bed and board of "the wrong man."

In a wholesome society woman's racial instincts will not be driven under as shameful, or artificially trammelled and weakened till they give forth only an uncertain sound. Even to-day, however, it probably is true in a great many—possibly a majority—of instances, as has been well said, that "even an emotionally unawakened girl is subliminally conscious of an attraction she has been trained not to feel, when she meets the man who, were she free to choose, would make life complete for her. No matter what we call the force which tells her suddenly that she is 'up against' quite a new set of emotions—magnetism, telepathy, intuition, or what not—there it is. She may have no idea why this one person should detach himself from the background of a hundred others, drawing her to himself; but of the fact she can no more doubt than of her own existence."

In any case we would yet once more urgently warn the girl who would be a happy wife against marrying

just for the sake of being married, or from the fear of spinsterhood; let her wait until she has heard the authentic voice, even if she has to wait a year or two longer than this or that companion. For either man or woman to marry without that sanction is to commit both an irretrievable blunder and an unforgivable sin; and they who partake unworthily of what should be love's sacrament take it to their own undoing.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE—*Continued.*

LOVE-MATES AND LIFE-MATES.

In the preceding pages we have strongly emphasised the importance—the true *conditio sine qua non* of Wise Wedlock—of that romantic and passionate affection which even in its most exalted manifestations derives ultimately from the attraction of sex on opposite sex. By this, of course, we mean something very different from the transient fancies stirred by a pretty face framed in a pretty hat, or an athletic form set off to advantage by sporting clothes or military uniform. A good many so-called love-matches repose on nothing more solid than this fleeting inspiration; no wonder that this kind of romance so often disappears with the wearing-off of what was simply a passing infatuation.

But these counterfeits of love do not disprove the existence of the genuine phenomenon, that fusing of two individualities under the processes of a marvellous alchemy of which sense and soul partake in equal measure, nay, in which the very boundaries of sense and soul melt and are done away. We shall not say that such love is to be met only once in a lifetime by anyone; we greatly distrust the reality of such an "ideal" passion as that of Dante for Beatrice—which, by the way, did not hinder him from marrying another woman and becoming the father of a numerous progeny by her—and on the other hand every reader of the

beautiful memoir of Alfred Lyttelton knows of at least one instance of two deep and true loves in a life.

What is quite certain, and borne out by experience, is that where a man and woman are conscious of an irresistible mutual magnetism, they will instinctively desire to be linked together in a permanent union, to come together, not for the passing satisfaction of passing though recurrent wants, but for the mingling of their whole lives in a "higher synthesis." The basis of the ideal marriage will be a grand passion, the feeling, subtly compounded of physical and spiritual elements, that in this person out of all others whom we have met will our own being find its completion and sublimation. We are speaking, needless to say, of a shared feeling, experienced on both sides: he is no true lover who can resign himself to the possession of one who does not return but only suffers his love; in such a case delicacy, self-respect, a glance beyond the immediate future, should save him from pressing for that which is of no worth unless freely and gladly yielded.

This vindication of the rights of love is necessary in an age which is half-contemptuous and wholly afraid of passion, and in whose imagination both love and passion are besmirched by the unclean associations with which the topic of sex has been surrounded. And especially is such a vindication necessary in addressing a public with a deep-seated national habit of reserve and a profound distrust of the emotions—that settled abhorrence of anything resembling gush, which leads to such grotesque results, as, *e.g.*, the adoption of "old thing" as a term of endearment, and of "pretty decent" as almost the highest form of permissible praise. As a protest against mere sloppiness, understatement is not without its value; only, language has its reactions on thought, and it is distinctly not sufficient warrant for marriage that *A* should think of *B* as "not bad," and

B return the compliment by regarding *A* as "a pretty good sort." Not from such neutral-tinted mutual esteem —hardly rising above the level of mutual toleration— do ideal unions take birth.

On the other hand, that powerful distrust of sentiment of which we just spoke sometimes seeks to justify itself as a principle of right reason, never more in its place than when the whole future of two people is concerned; as when a character in a brilliant comedy of manners says to the girl whom he asks to release him, "On every ground except love I'm quite unfit to marry you," and when she timidly interposes that surely love is enough, she is met with the retort, "Let's face facts, and not shirk them. *Marriage isn't a thing to be romantic about. It lasts too long.*"

Now we shall not deny that there are persons of either sex—such as the charming young detrimental who utters the words just quoted—who, while delightful as lovers, are simply impossible as husbands or wives; it is indeed a sign of grace if such as these recoil from entering a relationship for which they feel themselves unfitted, and in which they could only ruin the lives of their hapless partners. But for all that, to pretend to divorce love from marriage, and to declare that the latter "isn't a thing to be romantic about," is a mere wilful paradox, founded probably on the quite mistaken idea of romance as idle dalliance, sport or pastime. But genuine romance is none of these—it is, on the contrary, serious and even solemn; indeed, the world always notes with wonder, and some degree of amusement, how seriously lovers take themselves and their mutual devotion. Nevertheless, it is the lovers, and not the world, who are in the right of it, for what passion has a greater right to seriousness than that from which flows the shaping of all the future?

For all that, the answer to the question, asked in

all simple good faith, "Surely love is enough?" must be very decidedly in the negative, if what is meant is "enough for marriage." Obviously it is not. For many and unanswerable reasons, marriage may be out of the question, love notwithstanding. Inability to maintain a wife is such a reason. The unmistakable presence of consumption in either of the lovers is such a reason. Venereal disease, which will infect an innocent girl and poison the very unborn, is such a reason. And there are others. Marriage *is* a thing to be romantic about, to be sure; but it is also a thing to be sensible about, and not to rush into at the behest of passion when the plain dictates of conscience or good sense forbid it.

Now just because man's racial instincts are more acutely alive and more easily aroused than those of woman, in whom they have been curbed and attenuated, he is more liable to be misled by listening to the voice of instinct alone, as if there were no other to be heard and considered. A girl thinks of many things besides (and often before) love in connection with marriage; passion, indeed, in the single girl of our race is as a rule so latent a factor as to be practically non-existent. Hence she weighs pros and cons far more dispassionately—in the literal meaning of the word—than the man; her judgment is less likely than his to be overwhelmed by sheer importunateness of desire, and while he is mainly seeking for a love-mate, she is seeking for a life-mate. These, it may be readily admitted, are only generalisations, and between individual and individual of the same sex there is room for wide variation; but on the whole it may be laid down that man is apt to be swayed rather too much by the romantic motive for marriage, and woman rather too little; and that prudential—or, if you will, worldly—considerations are likely to influence her rather more and him rather less than they ought. Mere propinquity, for that matter

—as the "designing" type of woman well knows—will often prompt him to the decisive and all but irrevocable step of proposal; for without being given any subtly-distilled love-philtre, there is that within him which, given favourable circumstances, tends to make him

see
Fair Helen's self in any woman's face.

Let it then be granted as a fundamental axiom that those who would embark on the great adventure of matrimony with any hope of a prosperous voyage must before all else be *love*-mates, finding in each other the uttermost satisfaction; but let it also be understood that unless they are more than that they are not likely to prove mutually helpful *life*-mates. Given that mystic, unanalysable accord which makes this man and this woman exercise the most powerful attraction upon each other, while the world looks on wondering what he can see in her, or she in him, there are still other conditions which must be fulfilled if there is to be any sound prospect of married happiness for these twain. Broadly stated, their minds must speak the same language, they must have common interests, tastes, traditions; there must be that similarity of general antecedents, that approximately equal intellectual standard, without which our two lovers will all too soon discover unbridgeable gulfs, incurable incompatibilities, making their appearance.

We do not at all mean that the wife of a Greek scholar, *e.g.*, should be able to read Euripides in the original with her husband; but we are strongly of opinion that it will be an advantage if she has heard of the existence of Euripides, and is able to take an interest in her husband's life-work—in other words, if she belongs to that section of the community which sends its daughters to the High School and the Ladies' College, rather than to the one whose young womanhood

leaves the elementary school for the shop or the factory. Mr. Kipling may have proclaimed an immortal truth in the lines which declare that

> The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
> Are sisters under their skins;

but it will be a mistake for the young subaltern fresh from Sandhurst to marry Miss O'Grady and to present her to the Colonel's lady, his mother, on the strength of that universal subcutaneous sisterhood. The keen politician whose wife is simply bored by what to him is the most absorbing topic on earth; the social reformer who finds in his home no spark of comprehension for his aspirations, these and their like, though they may have married for love, have each still married "the wrong woman," while their partners have as unmistakably married the wrong men.

We make no apology for labouring this point in what may seem a somewhat one-sided manner; but the fact cannot be usefully blinked that it is the absence of intellectual sympathy between husbands and wives that explains not a few conjugal disasters which, with a wiser choice in the first instance, need never have occurred. It was, *e.g.*, the ultra-domesticity (or, to state it baldly, the mental nullity) common among Athenian wives, which accounted for the rise and influence of the class of *hetairai,* with their wit and culture and vivacious grace—women in whom the most brilliant men of that most brilliant age found their intellectual equals, with something of feminine charm superadded. When one hears, to quote an actual though perhaps extreme instance, of the young wife of a highly endowed brainworker plaintively remarking, "I don't know what to talk to him about," one trembles for their matrimonial future; but one also marvels why this man should have married a girl so patently his inferior in education, and feels at the same time that in doing so

he inflicted a grievous and irreparable wrong upon her, for which he—but not she—deserved to suffer.

It is sometimes contended that people of opposite temperaments ought to marry, the assumption being that the grave will balance the gay, the lively the severe; that the practical will be all the better for being blended with the romantic, the sober with the ardent, the idealistic with the matter-of-fact, and so forth. It sounds excellent in theory, but we strongly doubt the soundness of this advice. For it is not a case of blending or balancing, but of harmonising; and two totally dissimilar temperaments will produce not harmony but discord.*

That a shy and studious man of books and a gay and sparkling society butterfly may at some dinner or reception derive pleasure from each other's company through the very piquancy of contrast is neither an uncommon nor an incomprehensible occurrence; but married life is quite singularly unlike a series of festive social functions, and the diversity which acted as a spice in the one case will jar most mercilessly in the other. Ill-assorted couples, where husband and wife have really nothing in common, are all too frequently encountered; inevitably they drift further and further from each other, and it is matter for thankfulness if *he* finds consolation only at his club, *she* in her household and the minor distractions of shopping, clothes, amusements and the like.

Indeed, on this latter point, very secondary as it may seem, it is most desirable that there should be agreement between those who contemplate marriage: if the one is of the home-staying, the other of the pleasure-

* We admit an exception in the case of the hyper-sensitive artist or the erratic-neurotic genius. These types, for everybody's sake, had best not marry at all; but if they needs must do so, their mates had better be of the stolid, insensitive order, and prosaic to the core.

loving order—a love of pleasure which may not be at all excessive—such a thoroughgoing difference is sure to make its effects disagreeably felt. "Can I never get you to stir beyond your threshold?" says the one. "Can you never be content within your four walls?" complains the other; and from this single discord others will follow. Let us quote a few lines of dialogue from a modern comedy, which condense a large amount of worldly and above all of matrimonial wisdom, though perhaps with a shade of exaggeration:

> "Well, I don't want to stop her amusements. Why should I?"
> "But are you prepared to share them?"
> "Is that necessary?"
> "Very. If you don't, someone else will. You can afford to differ with your wife about religion, but you *must* agree about amusements."

We can only once more ventilate our favourite idea, *i.e.*, plead that, where such a thing is at all possible, our two candidates for wedlock should share a holiday, as free as possible from supervision and the adroit or maladroit "management" of third persons; during such a period they will make any number of useful observations and enlightening discoveries about each other's characters, tempers and inner resources—and it will be all the better if the holiday should include a proportion of dull and rainy days, so that they may see whether they can bear monotony, and rise above monotony, together.

But if there is one temperamental diversity which is more than any other fraught with the dire probability of conjugal catastrophe, it is that between those whose sexual impulses are of normal or above normal strength and those who are sexually frigid and apathetic. Yet while this one disharmony is the cause of an incalculable amount of married unhappiness, it is a point on which it is almost impossible to form any correct estimate until after marriage has actually taken place—which means

until it is too late. He is a more than usually discerning wooer who can tell whether the girl he seeks to make his wife will prove responsive or merely passive as a love-mate, whether this delicate blossom of womanhood, when it opens, will disclose a fragrant or a scentless flower; and yet, on her proving thus or thus a good deal of their future happiness will depend. The worst of it is that pre-marital coldness, having become a stereotyped and standardised second nature in most modern women of British blood, is no sure guide; on the other hand, where the man has seen one chance spark sent up under the stress of some great emotion, some close and tender embrace, he may be assured of the slumbering fires underneath, waiting to break through the crust. A snow-pure, snow-cold virgin once awakened from her dreamless sleep by the destined lover's impassioned kiss may discover in herself an ardour such as she herself never suspected; but how is he to know whether he is that destined one? One would give much for an assured answer to that momentous question.

From diversities of temperament we pass on to diversities of age—indeed to the whole subject of the age at which to marry. Since Wise Wedlock presupposes at least physical maturity, and since man ripens more slowly than woman, it follows that the old custom is right which insists that the husband should be his wife's senior; and since woman's physique as a rule does not reach the maximum strength requisite for the strain of child-bearing before the age of twenty-five, her prospective partner should be at least some years above that minimum. When it is taken into consideration that few men under thirty are in a position to keep a wife—to say nothing of the contingency of a family—in even moderate comfort, and when it is further borne in mind that mental and moral ripeness and stability are not to be expected

from youthful inexperience, it will be seen that boy-and-girl marriages are to be strongly deprecated. Immature husbands and wives become the parents of children who remain all their lives physically, mentally and morally immature. And while we recognise the strength of the masculine sex-impulse, we deny quite definitely that its gratification in the early twenties, either within or without the bonds of matrimony, constitutes a necessity, or that self-control is not reasonably to be expected. On this subject we shall have something more to say in a subsequent chapter.

Very considerable gaps between the ages of husband and wife are almost always undesirable, if only for the reason that they must in the nature of things mean those very diversities of tastes and temper which even the best intentions cannot prevent from leading to disharmony. The girl of twenty is often more grown-up than the youth of twenty-five; but when she marries a man of twice her age or more the disparity between his experience and her inexperience will make the relationship difficult at best, and possibly quite unbearable, unless on one or both sides there are many wise concessions. The marriage of an old man to a young girl, and still more that of a young man to a woman approximately old enough to be his mother, will always arouse an instinctive æsthetic distaste which is ultimately based on the most cogent biological reasons. The ageing or aged husband's waning vitality cannot content the legitimate desires of a young and healthy woman, though he may stimulate without satisfying them; and the withered charms of an elderly woman cannot arouse the natural instincts of a young man, who will in the majority of cases turn elsewhere. Such marriages are almost in the nature of incentives to irregular compensations. And here let it be said in passing that in woman's earlier loss of youthfulness and sex-attraction

as compared with man's there is yet another extremely strong reason why a husband should be quite several years older than his wife. At fifty a man who has kept himself fit and lived temperately is still in his prime; long before she has reached that age a woman as a rule has felt the ebbing of the tide. This is nature's cruelty, not man's, and we have, by wise mating, to soften its incidence.

When a marriage is contemplated between, say, a Catholic and a Protestant, there is as a rule a very clear understanding between the parties as to the religion in which the children (if any) of the union are to be brought up. We wish it were as customary, in the case of *every* projected marriage, to have an equally clear understanding between the parties as to whether it is intended to have or to avoid having children. Grown-up people whose prudishness is such that they cannot bring themselves to discuss such a topic when about to enter into a life-long contract, are certainly not fit for so serious a step. A divergence on this most vital point, kept secret by one prospective partner from the other, is in effect a very odious deception, especially when, as is sometimes the case, it is the woman's unavowed intention either to evade the consummation of the marriage or to reduce it as early as possible to a marriage in name only. To have children is generally the woman's—and often the man's—dearest desire; where there is disagreement on this fundamental point we say quite definitely that "it is not good to marry."

There is one final pre-requisite of Wise Wedlock on which we cannot but think that before long enlightened public opinion, and not much later legislation, will insist: we refer to a medical certificate of freedom from tuberculosis and venereal disease. It is not to be tolerated that State and Church should connive at the transmission of either the white or the hidden plague,

or that they should sanction the poisoning of the very wells of life. In the interests of womanhood and childhood unborn we must press for this desperately-needed change in our customs; we cannot simply acquiesce in the multiplication of the unfit because, forsooth, venereal disease is an unpleasant subject to talk about. It is a far more unpleasant, a far more formidable reality, disfiguring, blinding, incapacitating and slaying its tens of thousands every year, and making married life the worst of hells for innocent wives. Every parent, every girl asked to link her life with that of a man, should insist on this condition being complied with; the prospective husband's financial soundness, while not without its importance, is of far less consequence than his physical soundness, and the time must surely come when self-respecting men will of their own accord tender such a certificate as a guarantee that they are clean and fit to wed.

We are conscious of having traversed a wide field very rapidly, and we make no pretence to exhaustiveness in the treatment of a subject whose complexities are truly endless. Nevertheless we believe that those who act on the advice here given, though they must still in venturing on marriage set out "for the unknown with the unknown," will at least have honourably minimised for themselves and their partners the risks incident to the voyage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO ENIGMAS.

From the dawn of history to the present day man and woman have been facing each other as enigmas, mutually provocative, mutually fascinating, and not seldom mutually irritating in the highest degree. Each is indispensable, each is incomprehensible, to the other. Do without each other they cannot; yet every now and then they will vow by all the powers that do with each other they can still less. Inseparable allies, they have also the feelings of irreconcilable antagonists. "I shall never understand you," says she, sadly or impatiently, as the case may be. "I have long given up trying to understand *you,*" he retorts, meaning that it is no use attempting to find sense or reason in a creature so fundamentally irrational, yet, alas, so irresistibly attractive. What both alike for the most part fail to see is that it is just as enigmas that they charm and attract each other.

For an unsolved, insistent riddle is never dull; and each sex offers to the other an unlimited field for speculative guesses and daring hypotheses, for adventurous exploration, full of exciting uncertainties, unsuspected possibilities, a whole world of uncharted deeps and untrodden hinterlands. It takes an unusually stupid man to imagine that he has fathomed woman's—any woman's—nature; and we doubt whether there is a woman so stupid as to hug a similar delusion about man, though it may please her to pretend to this kind of encyclopædic

knowledge. If they are wise they will confess quite candidly that they have "never got to the end" of each other; and this is as it should be. It is with a chuckle of gratification that the Self-made Merchant, writing to his son, avows that while he knows everything there is to be known about the great American Hog, yet that admirable woman, his wife, after thirty years' married existence, will any day prove herself capable of springing a complete surprise on him. We repeat that this is as it should be; when a man and a woman cease to be mutually elusive, to hold any mystery for each other, they also cease to be mutually interesting, and the salt of life has *pro tanto* lost its savour.

These are truths founded in nature itself, truths which nature will not readily allow us to forget. There is that in each sex which the other can never fathom; their outlook on any conceivable subject, their method of envisaging and approaching any topic under the sun, differs by reason of the most radical and unbridgeable difference between any two beings, the difference between man and woman. Whether it be a question of cosmogony or cosmetics, they will each view it from a different angle, not because they want to, but because they cannot help themselves. Let a man and a woman but so much as tell an anecdote—the same anecdote—and note the difference in the telling! Assuredly the old saying, "*Quum duo faciunt idem, non est idem,*" is never so true as when the "*duo*" respectively represent masculine and feminine humanity.

But the remarkable fact about our civilisation is that, not content with this inevitable and sufficiently marked distinction, it has actually and deliberately accentuated it, and made men and women more mysterious, less comprehensible, to each other than they need be. A quite unnecessary and pernicious ignorance of each other, and even of themselves, has been systematically

cultivated, with deplorable results all round—misunderstandings, discords, heartbreaks.

Considering how essential it is that those who are destined to be so closely brought together should so far as possible understand each other's peculiarities and the points of view resulting therefrom, one would have thought that society, for the sake of its own wellbeing, would make it one of its first concerns to afford its younger members enlightenment on matters which will so greatly affect their happiness. But to this day youth is allowed to pick up its knowledge of sex-facts haphazardly, in the most undesirable manner, in distorted form, and sullied with unclean and lascivious suggestions. What should be high and holy knowledge is gained in an underhand and furtive fashion, which stamps it from the first as a guilty secret; it is derived from polluted and polluting sources, and enters the young mind as a poison, inflaming and tainting the imagination.

We have not room here to press the claims of sex-instruction for boys and girls; but the lack of such instruction is nothing less than criminal, and accounts for any amount of vice and misery. It is truly amazing that while we think it worth while to see to it that our youth are taught the exact date of the reign of Queen Anne and the precise latitude and longitude of Spitzbergen, we should leave them unacquainted with the most important data concerning the vital functions they will presently discharge.

Savage tribes exercise greater commonsense as well as truer regard for their young people by making them pass at the age of puberty through solemn explanatory rites of initiation; we, in the name of "delicacy," are intent only on devising effective smoke-screens, erecting barricades of misleading silence, and by treating natural matters in an ultra-mysterious manner succeed merely in increasing the normal fascination of sex to an ab-

normal and unwholesome extent. Consistently, by all we do *not* say, we impress the young mind with the notion that sex is a disgusting business, of which the less said the better, and degrade that which is "the driving-force of the world, bigger than the night sky, cleaner than the sea," to the level of "a hidden thing of shame," the very mention of which is the mark of a nasty mind.

And then we profess to wonder that this seed of ignorance and misinformation should yield so abundant a harvest of sexual perversity and marital unhappiness! Why wonder, when we are content to let our youth of both sexes grow up unfurnished with that saving knowledge—truthfully, tactfully, sympathetically conveyed—without which to enter into the most blessed but also the most trying of relationships is almost to court disaster? Marriage does not effect a sudden enlightenment, making all clear that was obscure before; rather will those who contract it in ignorance be liable to stumble from misunderstanding to deeper misunderstanding. To leave the matter to "instinct" is to lean upon a broken reed; instinct, sufficient to guide the animal and primitive man in the conduct of their affairs, tends to weaken and grow uncertain in the civilised races, and requires to be reinforced by reason and tuition.

But apart from all other major and minor misunderstandings between the sexes, due to preventable ignorance, there exists a diversity between men and women at the very centre of their respective organisations, and yet one which is rarely known to or suspected by either. This is nothing less than a diversity in regard to the sex-impulse itself; and it is their failure to understand and make mutual allowance for this fundamental difference which does probably more than anything else to cloud the marital horizon and to spoil the harmony of countless marriages.

Let us take some average married pair and put the matter without circumlocution, thus: She does not understand the importance which he attributes to one particular thing, which to her way of thinking and in her scheme of married life occupies at best a secondary place, viz., the conjugal act; while he as little understands why what to him matters so intensely matters so little to her that apparently she would not miss it—and least of all does he understand her when she shows not merely indifference but aversion to that act. This, indeed—her manifestation of aversion—distresses and disconcerts him beyond measure, and in his search for an explanation he will rush to the conclusion that his wife does not love him any longer; which is quite a mistaken reading of the case, but none the less painful for that. In the meantime *her* conclusion is likely to be that what her husband calls love is mere physical appetite, which she has a right to resent and to resist —in which she is no less mistaken than he. And finally she does not understand why his sex-needs should manifest themselves so frequently as to be practically always ready to become insistent; while he does not at all understand why the partner who but a few days ago proved so responsive to his advances should suddenly repel and meet them with refusal. Thus these two confront each other as enigmas in the central relationship of marriage. Can we provide these puzzled, bewildered mortals with a key to the riddle which, while it remains unsolved, is fretting their nerves and threatening to estrange them from each other?

For humanity's sake the task must be attempted, and the plain facts plainly stated.

On the physiological side—and once more we shall do well to bear in mind that "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; *then* that which is spiritual"—the sex-needs of man are due to the

constant accumulation in his organism of a secretion which demands an outlet. This is the seminal fluid carrying the sperm-cells, which, when it enters the female organism, and if it there performs its fertilising function, will kindle a new life; and the impulse of this fluid to reach its destination is the very vital impulse, as powerful as life itself. Even while the individual is unaware of the nature of the urgencies within him, this is the relief he seeks, viz., the discharge of the life-giving substance he is continually secreting, a relief preceded by vehement desire and accompanied by vehement gratification. For the existence of this desire he is not responsible, nor is that desire, even in its undifferentiated form—*i.e.*, before it is directed towards any particular woman—blameworthy. It is an elementary "want," and as little degrading to his manhood as the equally elementary want of food is degrading to his humanity, although he shares it with the sub-human creation.

From the fact that the process of which we spoke goes on all the time, it follows that the need to which it gives rise is, potentially at least, almost always present, at any rate always easily aroused, never more than slumbering, and when awakened apt to prove of overwhelming force. Nothing is more essential than that the growing youth should learn betimes to acquire habits of self-control, which will enable him to convert physical into psychic energies (see Chap. V., p. 64); nothing is more unfortunate than that he should, by indulgence in alcohol, by lewd conversations, or by attending amusements deliberately calculated to inflame the sexual appetite, artificially stimulate an impulse which, even when of normal strength, requires vigilant and strenuous endeavour for its regulation. This highly necessary task, with all its effects on mind and character, is by no means easy of accomplishment, and a

good deal of harm may be done by representing it as such; incidentally, such well-meant attempts at persuasion, apart from the disappointment to which they lead, do something to increase the misunderstanding of one sex by the other.* Man really has something to fight against—call it a thorn in the flesh—of which woman, by reason of her different organisation, has no corresponding experience; and women who marvel that men should find it difficult to control impulses which *they* have always mastered, do so because they are unaware of a simple fact of male physiology. The common opinion, which expects chastity from women as a matter of course and judges feminine failures in this respect more severely than those of men, rests upon the not unfounded belief that chastity is easier for women —that the less the temptation, the greater the fault.

Having regard to its origin—the rising of a tide which seeks a channel for its liberation—we shall understand that the sex-need in man exists, to begin with, in what we called an undifferentiated state; indeed it is no rare occurrence for that vital tide, dammed back and denied an outlet, at last to rebel and overflow its borders during the hours of sleep, thus giving relief to the overcharged system. The substance prompting desire already exists within the man, just as the electricity to be discharged anon exists within the cloud; but as the lightning will be attracted by some particular object, so man's desire will presently turn for its appeasement

* That a duty — in this case sexual self-control — should be difficult, does not make it any the less imperative; but there is nothing gained by representing it as easy. If it were so, it would not be a fact that, as computed by Dr. O. May, at least 80-90 per cent. of the men in Great Britain, and a higher percentage in Latin countries, have pre-marital sex-experiences. Such a deplorable state of things is to be accounted for only by the existence of an exceedingly strong want, inadequately controlled, and not by the hypothesis of a double dose of original sin in one half of humanity.

to some particular individual of the other sex, whose qualities of charm and grace, or whose mere abounding vitality, add an external to the internal stimulus. What are the precise qualities in any individual woman which will appeal to any individual man, or *vice versa*, it is impossible to say; the attraction may be the slightest and most evanescent, or the most irresistible and enduring; indeed, that which commenced in a merely physical want, capable of its merely physical assuagement in almost any quarter, may prove the most individualised and enduring passion, supreme and all-absorbing, and concentrating itself exclusively and permanently upon the one cherished object.

Between the vulgar appetite which turns almost indiscriminately to this or that mercenary companion for a night of indulgence, and the ideal devotion which makes the very thought of union with any other but the beloved impossible for the lover to entertain, there is a whole world's difference; yet they began in the self-same physical instinct, and apart from that instinct neither the lowest nor the highest could exist. And here let it be said explicitly that while man is not *naturally* monogamous, but rather polygynous, it is his privilege and his destiny in this as in other respects to transcend nature, so that he finds the truest fulfilment of his varied needs only in a life-long monogamic union.

When we turn to the sex-instinct and impulse in woman—meaning for the purpose of this discussion the normal woman of our northern type—it has to be remarked at once that that impulse in her is altogether less clamant, less urgent, even less conscious of itself, than in man. Indeed, the typical healthy unwedded girl of our race rarely experiences any definite sexual desire. We can easily see the reason for this dissimilarity, once it is pointed out to us; there is in the processes going on in the female organism nothing

analogous to that continuous accumulation of the sperm-cells which create the male desire. Thus it is possible for a girl to reach womanhood, and even to enter marriage, without so much as suspecting the basic facts of sex-relationship; we can only add that to allow her so to grow up, so to cross the threshold of matrimony, is one of the cruellest crimes that can be committed against a human being—it is to expose her to physical, mental and moral shocks from which she may never recover, and which may wreck her own and her husband's life. A bride who does not know either her husband's or her own part in fulfilling the sex-function—and such cases occur—is liable, when she finds herself suddenly confronted with the unsuspected realities, to contract a permanent and unconquerable repugnance for what should be the symbol and consummation of mutual love and mutual surrender.

More probably, however, she will have arrived at the marriageable age not indeed without all knowledge of sex, but with a woefully incomplete and inaccurate knowledge, distorted and sullied by the belief that sex is a thing to be ashamed of, and the exercise of the marital function a descent from the heights of virgin purity to a lower level. This view, with which her whole training —the careful avoidance of the topic, its habitual association with things forbidden and disgusting—will have imbued her, will needs have further inhibited her natural impulses; the rigorous discipline of generations will have done its work, and the axiom that it is shameful to think of certain things, to feel certain emotions at all, will have produced a certain frigidity or sex-anæsthesia in her which may, and in many instances does, persist through life.

This physically and emotionally unawakened creature will neither understand nor respond to—she will be frightened and may be repelled by—her hus-

band's ardent desires; she will yield to them at last, whether from real affection or from what she has been taught about "wifely duty," yet passively, without pleasure, without reciprocity of feeling. What she may be conscious of will be a certain compassion, ever so faintly tinged with contempt, for an inferior being, dowered with grosser needs; and while mastering her distaste she will come to the conclusion that "men are like that—even the best of them—because the animal inheritance preponderates in their natures." There are multitudes of wives, genuinely fond of their husbands, who are yet as genuinely puzzled that their partners' affection should demand this particular expression, which to them seems not only superfluous but degrading. "Is *that* love?" they ask, a little scornfully, a little sadly, and with a sense of disillusion.

Others, again, conceive it to be their mission to wean their husbands from what they regard as their low appetites, and seek either to reduce conjugal relations to a minimum or to break them off categorically. On such a course, it cannot be too clearly understood, disaster waits without fail; denied legitimate satisfaction in the legitimate quarter, a healthy man, thus frustrated, will almost invariably turn to another, and that the more readily since he regards himself as the injured and defrauded party. A man who marries does not intend to lead a monastic existence.

But while sexual anæsthesia is unhappily common among women of the upper and middle classes, it is an utter mistake to imagine that women are naturally and constitutionally deficient in warmth and sexual desire—that the "nice" woman at any rate has no knowledge of such. That view was, and probably is still, widely prevalent. "Sexual activity," says Havelock Ellis, "was regarded as an exclusively masculine function, in the exercise of which woman had merely a passive part

to play. Any active participation on her side seemed unnecessary and even unbefitting, finally—though only in comparatively modern times—disgusting and actually degrading. Thus Acton, who was regarded half a century ago as the chief English authority on sexual matters, declared that 'happily for society' the supposition that women possessed sexual feelings could be put aside as 'a vile aspersion'; while another medical authority of the same period stated in regard to the most simple physical sign of healthy sexual emotion that it 'only happens in lascivious women.'" Custom and prejudice, which denied most other rights to women, denied them even the right, even the capacity, for healthy, untrammelled feelings, lowering them to the status of passionless, neutral instruments for the appeasement of male appetite.

Nevertheless, and all *a priori* denials notwithstanding, it remains a fact that the average normal woman is as capable of intense sexual desire and its intense satisfaction as the average normal man; she is even liable to suffer severely from the effects of the non-satisfaction of those wants. The difference is that in her the impulse, as we said, is less clamant, less conscious of itself, than in man; that even though "her whole structure and life rallies more closely round the sexual function than in man," yet love in her is more diffused than in him, that it "dwells longer in caresses and embraces," while her passion is more slowly aroused than his. Her desire, unlike man's, is not always potentially present and ready to seek its fulfilment, but is intermittent and reappears at rhythmic intervals, when her sexual vitality is at flood-tide—as a rule shortly before and shortly after her menstrual period.

Owing to her different organisation, a woman seldom experiences the undifferentiated sex-impetus which besets man; and owing to the inhibitory nature

of her training and the false ideas concerning sex which have been inculcated into her, she may often be without emotional initiative—her sensory and emotional capacities may have been so effectively damped down that she will remain unstirred even in marriage. But when or if the awakening does come, when she loses her *mauvaise honte,* the false sense of sinking below her best self in allowing herself to feel what she is by nature capable of feeling, new realms of rapture open to her, and the erstwhile marble statue begins to throb

> With passionate necessity of joy—
> Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

It is then that she becomes, in one word, man's love-mate, sharing his transports, and by her participation transposing them from the key of selfish gratification into that of a glorious communion of sense and soul, *cœur et corps,* in which alone marriage is truly consummated.

But there can be no such consummation—there can be no such communion—there can be no successful adjustment between two beings who do not in the first place realise the profound differences which exist between them, and at which we have just glanced. They must understand themselves and one another if they are to enter into the kingdom prepared for them. He must remember that hers is not the vehement, spontaneous urgency of which he is conscious, but that her desire and response have to be gradually kindled, and that there are periods in her moon-cycle when it is hardly within her power so to respond—periods during which it will be his wisdom to restrain his ardour. She must learn to believe that the sex-impulse is implanted in human nature, not for mortification but for fulfilment; that it is not a feeling to excite disgust or contempt; that it is his part to woo, hers to yield herself to his wooing without thought of suffering defilement thereby.

And both have to cultivate that respect for each

other's individuality which marriage, so far from abolishing, ought to deepen and enhance. It is because they are so unlike to one another that they were drawn together in the first instance; it is because of their dissimilarities of endowment that they are incomplete in themselves; it is by bringing together and harmonising their divergences—a task requiring much thought and all the wisdom of love—that they are fitted to strike the perfect chord and to achieve the perfect unity of holy wedlock.

CHAPTER V.

"O PERFECT LOVE!"

Let us not always say,
" Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry " All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

We all remember being much amused in our early days by the mild joke about the young man who, on being asked whether he could play the violin, replied with sweet modesty and entire guilelessness that "he did not know, as he had never tried." Mere children as we were, we knew that to play the simplest little composition on the violin required lessons and practice; and the idea of the young man taking up an instrument to find out if he could perform on it appealed to our sense of the ludicrous.

When, however, the same young man sets about in the same casual manner to play on an immeasurably more complicated and delicate instrument without previous instruction—or rather, when he and his equally or even more untaught partner in wedlock attempt to play a duet, without an idea of tune or time or expression between them, to say nothing of technique or ability to read a musical score—we are not at all struck by the tragic absurdity of the spectacle. When a tyro who does not know how to hold his bow draws it haphazardly across the strings, we are prepared for discord; but when *two* tyros make an analogous experi-

ment, we somehow expect them to produce a flawless harmony!

All of which is merely to say what is so obvious that it ought not to require saying at all, viz., that if it needs tuition and preparation to execute a piece of music, if men and women are educated for years to acquit themselves creditably in their various vocations, it is the height of unreason to imagine that they will acquit themselves successfully without tuition, without preparation, in the most difficult and delicate of tasks, the task imposed by the relationship of marriage. The most marvellous natural voice has to be carefully trained, a very genius for the piano has to be initiated into countless mysteries of technique, a Korngold has to be taught the secrets of counterpoint; but of the young husband and wife we say, substituting sentimentality for commonsense, "Well, so long as they're fond of each other—instinct will do the rest!" Can it be wondered at if an enterprise taken in hand with such a lamentable lack of preparation so frequently turns out disappointing to both sides?

The doctor, the book-keeper, the nurse, the signalman, the sea-captain, the telegraph operator, all have been taught their jobs; marriage is the only profession for which we think no training is necessary. It is so much simpler to dispense with tuition and to rely on intuition. Unfortunately, in this highly complex business of marriage intuition is the kind of short cut which is not only likely to prove the longest way round, but often misses the goal altogether.

Perfection is never attained at a single bound; and the perfect love which is to be realised only in the unique intimacy of marriage is and must be a growth, and does not spring into being ready-made, as Pallas Athene was fabled to have sprung, adult and fully armed, from the head of Zeus. Husband and wife have an infinity of

things to learn about each other, and about themselves in relation to their mates; but many things they should be taught in advance, so as to avoid unnecessary stumbles and hurts. In any case there will have to be a multitude of mutual adjustments, careful gaugings, soundings, explorings of each other's manifold characteristics; and for the young wife in particular there is a whole momentous process of after-marriage education to be gone through, an awakening of faculties which had hitherto lain dormant, but which now must become active and function healthily if love is to have its perfect work. It may sound incredible, but it is not too much to say that in a large, perhaps the larger, proportion of the married women of the gentler classes in our country *this awakening never takes place at all,* and hence, for them, love never reaches its glorious apogee, nor can they even guess, except dimly, what it is that they have fallen short of.

In order to explain our meaning, we cannot do better than quote from an actual letter, embodying the writer's experience:—

"A girl brought up as I was to suppress her emotions and to look upon everything that touches on sex as rather vile, has, when she comes into contact with the realities of married life—assuming she loves her husband—to *grow* emotionally, just as she had to grow physically and mentally. She is not a rather cold, sexless and unimaginative girl one day, and a warm, passionate, responsive creature the next; and the fact of marriage, with its initiation, cannot be expected to act as a quick-change medium in the space of hours, days, or even weeks. It has got to be a gradual affair, and the man ought to understand this. It takes more than one kiss to wake the sleeping beauty, or rather the perfect lover slumbering in every woman.

"Custom has so instilled into the girl the notion

that a man's feelings differ entirely and absolutely from hers—and the man in his turn so firmly believes that a 'nice' girl feels things with a big element of reserve—that they lose sight of the truth that their full happiness in union depends on the fact that, *if they be in love, their feelings are identical.* Since I have known that I had a perfect right not merely to yield passively but to respond actively in the intimacies of love, there have opened up to me whole worlds of previously undreamed-of delight; 'one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.'"

Without this knowledge, this experience—tragically unattained in wedlock by many women—neither they nor their husbands can ever know the meaning of perfect love.

The want of this all-important knowledge is due to our whole misguided attitude towards sex; and women especially are readily imposed on by the fiction which, while exalting romantic "love," deprecates and minimises the sex-element which is its basis, with the result that love is "defecated to a mere transparency." We must resolutely break down this false and artificial antithesis between aspects of our nature which are meant to be complementary to each other; and just as it is time we abandoned the mock-modesty which presumes to call common and unclean what God has cleansed, so it is time we turned our backs on the folly which tries to put asunder what God has joined together—body and spirit, flesh and soul, sex and love.

For the great and significant truth, which yet is almost unsuspected except by those who have themselves experienced it, is that in human beings the physical union of real lovers becomes the vehicle and symbol of a spiritual union which cannot in any other way be so completely effected or expressed. From the bodily coalescence of lover and beloved, from the thrill

and ecstasy kindled and rekindled in that close embrace, the full mutual surrender and uttermost delight in one another, there spring emotions and sympathies that are quite unattainable save in this manner. This psycho-emotional aspect of the sex-function has too seldom been recognised in connection with the subject, and yet it is this which transfigures and exalts the sex-relation. Browning, with his robust and essential sanity, had the courage to proclaim the exact truth in the lines which we have prefixed to this chapter: repudiating the idea that spiritual progress is the reward of those who successfully resist and mortify their natural promptings, he enunciated in the very zenith of the mid-Victorian era the shattering doctrine that flesh may help soul as undeniably as soul helps flesh—a doctrine so unheard-of in that age of respectable pretence that it positively passed unheard, its revolutionary import unapprehended.

But the great poet was literally accurate. In the shared rapture of union between two beings who desire each other with every strand and fibre of their natures, the barrier between body and spirit is done away; in the supreme glow of a supreme sense of bliss there comes to pass a glorious fusion of individualities, each incomplete by itself, but having now found completion in its fellow. There takes place in them, psychically as well as physically, a subtle mutual interpenetration which leaves each of them other and more than before, their individualities heightened and yet assimilated to each other; in the profound words of Edward Carpenter, "it might be said that there is a kind of generation taking place *within* each of the persons concerned, and as they have become one flesh, so also a spiritual alchemy has been at work, and made of these twain one soul."

These are the marvellous possibilities which a beneficent Providence has placed within our reach, by

the proper use of endowments which in the course of evolution have raised us above the brute creation more distinctively in regard to sex than to any other of our faculties of sense. That which in the case of the animals serves merely the purpose of procreation has in the case of humanity become the potential and even the destined instrument for entwining man and woman in an undisseverable unity of the spirit, which outlasts physical charm, and may well outlast these mortal bodies altogether.

Possibilities only, be it observed, though to be hailed and aimed at, not to be ignored and neglected, as they too often are; but whether these glorious potentialities are to become actual for us must depend on a variety of circumstances.

In the first place, and this is surely obvious, such a realisation waits upon those only who have been drawn together by a love which is more than bodily attraction, but has in it—albeit perhaps hardly apprehended as such by the lovers—a spiritual element, an awed and tremulous prescience that here among ten thousand others is the one through union with whom life is capable of being made to yield its *summum bonum*, its acme of blessedness. It is utterly untrue, though the thesis is put forward in set terms by one of our more thoughtful playwrights, that "if you put a healthy man and a healthy woman together, love will come." We know quite well what is likely to come under such conditions —assuming that neither of them is attached in any other direction—but it is not love, the most highly individualised of all feelings. Neither will those highest possibilities of which we spoke be realised where the prelude to matrimony has been some mere infatuation on one or, maybe, on both sides; still less where the most momentous of contracts has been entered into on the basis of ignoble self-interest, for the sake of money,

influence or position. The man who might "just as easily" have married any other girl of quite a different type, and *vice versa,* cannot expect ideal happiness to result from such a fortuitous choice; nor yet those—and they are woefully numerous—who marry in a fit of disappointment, are "caught on the rebound," and the like. After all, if we would grow the perfect flower, we must in the first instance have and plant the seed.

But even given this first and essential condition, viz., real love on both sides, the result which each hoped from marriage may prove sadly disappointing, and that simply from such ignorance as we sought to remove in the previous chapter. We can but recur to the illustration we used a few pages back, and reiterate the truism that an instrument is not to be played without some acquaintance with its technique, without some idea of time and tune, without some attention to expression; and what is true of the art of the piano or the violin is doubly and trebly true of the delicate and difficult art of love, with its subtle half-tones and thousand intricacies. And where, as in so many instances, the two persons who might produce a sublime harmony are handicapped by lack of knowledge, where it has not even dawned upon them that there is an art to be learned, they will never extract from married life its fullest concord of sweet sounds.

To vary the metaphor, they may set out upon the climb from the valley in the best of spirits, but their feet will never tread the heights above the low-lying clouds. They may spend long years facing each other, years not necessarily devoid of kindliness and comfort and mutual regard, but they will never have shared "the instant made eternity," where "THOU" and "I" as terms of separate existence cease to have any meaning. Happily the art can be learned and practised by all who love each other sincerely, love itself being

undoubtedly a great teacher, just because it seeketh not its own.

If we have thus far laid stress on the important effects which flow from the physical union of wedded lovers in what concerns the spiritual side, it is likewise worthy of notice that a normal sex-life is among the chief of health-promoting agencies. That so uniquely important a function should have an equally important bearing on our wellbeing of body and mind is only what might be expected. Vitality is heightened, equipoise established or regained, moodiness and nervous irritability allayed, in those who use this function as not abusing it; and after the healthy appeasement of healthy desire, after the expenditure of vital energy, the fulness of joy received and given, comes the beneficent reaction of

> Innocent sleep, great Nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast.

That this is what the function of sex is intended to achieve for us, that we are meant to find in its exercise this relief of our entire being, cannot be open to doubt. But now it has to be noted that these healing and wholesome effects follow upon union only when the act has been properly completed—*i.e.*, when both partakers in it have experienced that climax of sensory ecstasy which is technically known as the orgasm; and it is just this orgasm which remains unexperienced by a vast proportion of married women, who do not even know that they ought to share the transports which they mistakenly regard as man's monopoly.

But ignorance of nature's laws unfortunately affords no immunity from the consequences which attend the non-observance of those laws; and just as we may not be conscious that we are breathing ozoneless air, but have to suffer for it later, so innumerable women whose sex-needs have never been stirred into conscious demand

for satisfaction, have to pay in ill-health for the non-satisfaction of these very needs. Insomnia, neurasthenia, uterine ailments, even malignant growths, are among the penalties thus exacted; "the sad conviction is forced upon me as a physician," writes a medical man, "that the chaste morality of women not infrequently revenges itself in the cruellest forms of disease."

And while it is the fashion to represent the repression of the sex-instinct as perfectly harmless, every physician knows numerous afflictions of body and mind which are directly traceable to sex-starvation. Indeed, even so idealistic a writer as Edward Carpenter, who rightly insists on "the possibility of deflecting physical desire to some degree into affectional and emotional channels, and the great gain so resulting," points out that "if the physical satisfaction be denied, the body becomes surcharged with emotion—sometimes to an unhealthy and dangerous degree." Marriage is the normal and wholesome state for normal and wholesome persons of either sex; and its denial to millions of women who find themselves condemned to compulsory celibacy is a deeper tragedy, from the health-point alone, than can be computed.

All the same, it will be urged, sexual self-restraint, abstinence, repression, or whatever we call it, is a necessity, felt increasingly as such as the race advances from lower to higher levels of civilisation; even marriage becomes hideous and is desecrated when it is made to serve unbridled legalised indulgence, and wives by no means deficient in warmth have been known to protest with justified indignation against being made their husbands' licensed concubines. Where unrestrained sexual indulgence is the rule, as among some branches of the negro race, the result is seen in an inability to rise above the unprogressive conditions of

primitive man. Let us treat this important subject with becoming care and candour by laying down the following points :—

(1) Self-restraint is entirely possible for both sexes, although, as previously explained, it involves a greater effort for most men than for most women.

(2) Self-restraint is not only possible, but, like all self-discipline, it is helpful in promoting strength of will and the making of character generally. To refrain, even under strong provocation, from snatching an indulgence which would involve injury, risk or degradation to another, is the mark of the higher type of manhood; and he who can, for the sake of principle, resist the promptings of sex, will be proof against most other temptations.

(3) There will be periods in the married life of every couple when, owing to unavoidable temporary separation, or for reasons of health, such as the wife's advanced pregnancy, conjugal relations have to be suspended; and while such suspension, if protracted, will impose a strain on both parties, and may even tell unfavourably on their physical wellbeing, it would be a monstrous doctrine that human nature is not equal to such a strain, or to condone infidelity in the manner of a euphemistic Caucasian proverb which pleads that "a poor devil must boil his kettle somewhere or other."

(4) It is true, even on the physical plane, that sexual energies may be otherwise absorbed or re-absorbed by the system—the tide of which we spoke in our last chapter may be diverted into other channels, *e.g.*, by means of hard bodily exertion, which leaves the frame exhausted and ready for dreamless sleep; hence the importance assigned to sports and games in the routine of boys' schools.

(5) It is equally true that these energies may up to a certain point be transformed into their emotional, intellectual and spiritual equivalents, and that most profitably, while nothing is so detrimental to intellect and character as sexual excess. Exacting mental preoccupations, single-minded devotion to difficult duty for duty's sake, the pangs and stresses of artistic creation, may tax a man's vital forces so heavily as to leave no margin over to make itself felt in the exigencies of sex. There is a French saying to the effect, "*le génie doit être chaste*"; and such withdrawal from the tendernesses and endearments which are love's due may even bear somewhat hardly on the human partner wedded to slightly inhuman genius, who has forgotten the precept, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest."

This conversion of physical into psychic energies, and especially the transmutation of mere sexual appetite into spiritual devotion, are well-attested in experience. "The repression and sublimation of the sex-impulse during childhood and youth," says Dr. William McDougall, the distinguished psychologist, "is an essential condition for the development and maintenance in any society of a high level of culture. And of such repression and sublimation, respect of the boy for the woman is the principal condition. . . . The result of the repression of the sex-impulse by these influences [viz., modesty and respect for members of the opposite sex,] may be described in the most general terms as an increase of seriousness in almost all fields of thought, feeling and action, especially in all that concerns personal and social relations and the conduct of life, and therefore in all questions of morality and religion." Even when it is borne in mind that Dr. McDougall's remarks refer directly only to the periods of childhood

and youth, it is a fact of paramount importance that crude sex-appetite can be so sublimated and "long-circuited" from direct expression into channels of intellectual, æsthetic and moral idealism.

But while sexual self-control is thus both necessary and salutary, we shall not make the mistake of confounding such restraint with the total inhibition of the sex-instinct, as though the latter were the ideal to be aimed at, and preferable to the reasonable exercise of the sex-function. Total inhibition, even where it is unavoidable, runs counter to the necessities of our nature, and is followed by nature's nemesis in the shape of all manner of morbid phenomena.

Above all, that perfect love which should crown marriage will never be attained by those who, from a perverted refinement or pseudo-spirituality, profess to despise love's physical side—a side which is not disregarded or slighted with impunity. In the words of Mr. Havelock Ellis, who speaks with unrivalled authority, "While it is perfectly true that sexual energy may be in a large degree arrested and transformed into intellectual and moral forms, yet it is also true that pleasure itself, and above all sexual pleasure, wisely used and not abused, may prove the stimulus and liberator of our finest and most exalted activities."

There is a deep and beautiful significance in the declaration, assigned to the man in the Marriage Service, "*With my body I thee worship*": only it is a declaration which ought to be mutually and understandingly tendered by *both* parties. For perfect love is neither of the body apart from the soul, nor of the soul apart from the body, but of both, and realised in both; and, knowing this, those who aspire to perfect love—the most spiritual of all human feelings—will, like one who wrote of old, "have confidence even in the flesh."

CHAPTER VI.

INITIATION.

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! (How perplexed
Grows belief!)

BROWNING, *In a Year.*

"But how am I to know if you do not tell me?"
"Don't insist, child—I shall not tell you."

MICHEL PROVINS, *Le Roman d'un Ménage.*

When the old-fashioned novelist had shown us how, though the course of true love had not run smooth—in which case there would have been no novel—yet at length the devoted lovers were made one, and on his last page described the hero and heroine walking down the aisle arm-in-arm to the strains of the Wedding March, he felt that he had once more honourably discharged his accustomed task, and earned the approbation of all Mr. Mudie's good subscribers. Bridegroom and bride had entered into the Promised Land, the haven of content, at the close of the third volume, to live happily ever after. In actual life we know that wedding-bells do not ring down the curtain, but rather ring it up on the real drama, to which what has gone before stands in the relation of mere prelude. The problems, the complications—possibly the conflicts, certainly a prolonged process of mutual adaptation—these will all commence after the young couple have bidden farewell to their friends, and, smothered in confetti, have started out by themselves on their joint adventure.

As their train glides out of the station we see them, two young persons with very scanty experience of life in general and with exceedingly few reliable data concerning each other in particular; their intimate acquaintance only begins at the very moment when there is no going back on the bargain they have just struck, and her ignorance is as a rule far greater and more pathetic than his. We know that the war has made many startling changes in manners and customs, and that there are many girls to-day to whom marriage has nothing to teach, either in theory or in practice; but these are, after all, only a small minority, and it is earnestly to be hoped that the notorious increase in the ranks of what are euphemistically known as "amateurs" represents only a passing post-war phase, indicative of that relaxation of moral standards which invariably accompanies times of great upheaval.

But the ordinary virgin girl of the middle class knows very little indeed of the physical realities of wedlock; and whatever may be her curiosities, they are checked by the training which has led her to view the whole topic of sex with æsthetic distaste. As, however, she approaches the step when these realities will have to be faced, she often seeks for enlightenment from her mother or some married friend—and generally seeks in vain. She is met either with blank refusals or with vague generalities and bland evasions: "there is so little to tell—she will see for herself that it is not worth all the fuss there is made about it." The fact is, the subject is an uncomfortable one to discuss: why anticipate, by going into matters of the greatest privacy, the solution of a mystery which in the nature of things will presently be a mystery to the questioner no longer? *"But how am I to know if you do not tell me?" "Don't insist, child—I shall not tell you."*

Perhaps two girl-intimates have made a compact —the one who is married first will unveil the secret to the other; that compact is never carried out. And so our inquirer is left to meet the ordeal unenlightened, with many inward misgivings; instinct tells her that the transition, in spite of those who would minimise its importance, must mean an immense deal: if she had but an idea how to face up to this experience! Well, she supposes it has to be—like going to the dentist's; if only she could have gas, to wake up and find it all over.

He, too, her husband-to-be, possesses only fragmentary and in part misleading knowledge, but *his* instinct is much more sure, and speaks with a definite voice; even if he has had no pre-marital experiences of sex, he knows exactly what he wants, and he knows, above all, that he wants it. She has none of these illuminating urgencies and anticipations; though she be tenderly attached to the man of her choice, a conscious sexual want, corresponding to his conscious want of her, hardly ever stirs the blood of the single girl of our race, schooled and suppressed as her impulses have been. The difference may be summed up by saying that what he will *do*, to her will merely *happen*.

Moreover, we must remember that quite apart from social customs and inhibitions it is of nature's own decree and contrivance that man should be the pursuer, woman the pursued, in the great drama of sex; that her coyness should increase and stimulate his eagerness. We know that this coyness is often simulated by the experienced flirt, for the very purpose of exercising greater fascination; but the simulated quality would not have that effect save as the counterfeit of a real and deeply-implanted one, which forms an integral part of woman's original endowment. It has, indeed, been one of Mr. Bernard Shaw's favourite theses that woman, as

the depository of the Life-Force, is the huntress, and man the helpless, semi-reluctant victim—a thesis to which he returns in "You Never Can Tell," "Man and Superman" and "Pygmalion"; but a capacity for standing on one's head is not conducive to normal vision, and, Mr. Shaw notwithstanding, it is throughout the higher branches of the animal kingdom the male who woos, the female who is wooed.

All this explains the fundamental fact which should never be forgotten, viz., that the normal bride—to state it very mildly—has no ardent wish for physical union, such as the normal man is conscious of; and imagination, which in him heightens desire, in her increases apprehension and *malaise*. She is prepared to make the sacrifice; but she views it *as* a sacrifice to the uncomprehended appetites of man.

Now it would frequently make all the difference if the bridegroom could realise her state of mind, her fears, the absence in her of passion answering to his passion; it would make him use the utmost gentleness and restraint in approaching her—it would, above all, render the process of transition, of initiation, far more gradual than it generally is. For want of any glimmering of this, the true state of affairs, fatal blunders are often committed and irreparable mischief done in the first night. Many a delicately-organised, highly-strung woman never gets over her horror of what to her appears the revelation of male brutality such as she never suspected to exist; she has not been won but "humbled," to use an expressive archaism, and a permanent, insuperable repugnance to conjugal relations may have been set up. And in how many cases, where no such dire results have followed on the new-made husband's maladroit overtures, is the honeymoon none the less a dismal fiasco, best dismissed from memory!

If some knowledge of sex-psychology is quite indispensable for Wise Wedlock, it is an equally essential condition that those who are to enter into that relation should possess quite clear and definite information concerning the physiological aspects of marriage, about the organs of sex, their nature and functions. Such information we must now proceed to impart as briefly as possible.

The man's generative organs are the penis and the testicles, the latter being the name given to the two rounded glands which lie in the scrotum, or purse, behind the penis. In the testicles is secreted the semen, the vital fluid containing the sperm-cells needed for the purpose of fertilisation, the kindling of new life. If a man, or the male of any mammal species, be castrated, *i.e.*, if the testicles be removed, paternity is impossible to him, and he never attains to many of the characteristics of virility. The secretion of the semen commences at the age of puberty, from thirteen to fifteen, and continues all through manhood, and possibly to advanced years where the constitution has not been weakened by dissipation and excess. We have seen that this stream tends to seek liberation; we have also seen that it can be re-absorbed into the system, and that such re-absorption, up to a certain point, is both physically and morally salutary.

In its quiescent, normal condition the penis is a short, flexible, dependent tube, incapable of effecting physical union. But under sexual excitation or stimulus, induced either by touch or by mental suggestion, a flow of blood is directed towards its veins, which fill up rapidly, and it becomes both distended and rigid; it is in the latter erect condition alone—*i.e.*, sexual desire having been aroused—that the sex-act can be performed by the man, and the semen transmitted to the woman. With the passing of excitement, the blood re-

treats from the veins of the penis and the erection subsides, leaving the organ once more shrunken and flexible.

The object of erection is to enable the penis to enter the woman's vagina, a canal or passage about three inches in length, which leads to the uterus, or womb. At the opening of the vagina, and protecting it, are two sets of lips, an outer and an inner, and in the case of a virgin a membrane or tissue, the hymen, which is provided with a small opening in the centre. There is also, situated between the inner lips, a small rudimentary organ, shaped like a crest or tongue, called the clitoris, which, like the penis, responds to stimulation by touch; *i.e.*, when so stimulated it undergoes enlargement, and becomes the focus of intense sensation. The uterus, to which the vagina acts as a forecourt, is a small pear-shaped sac, about three inches long and two inches broad; its neck, or narrow end, with a minute aperture, protrudes into the vagina, and it is in the steadily expanding shelter of the uterus that the child will grow during the months of pregnancy, until birth takes place. From the right and left sides of the womb lead two narrow passages, the Fallopian tubes, which open into the body cavity close to the ovaries, two organs of the size of an almond, each containing some 32,000 ova, or eggs. From the time when a girl reaches puberty, and her monthly flow begins, one such egg detaches itself each month from one of the ovaries, and passes into the womb. If it there meets and unites with a male sperm-cell, conception takes place, and in due course a child will be born; if there is no such meeting and fertilisation the egg will pass out of the vagina. So tiny are these eggs that a hundred-and-twenty joined together in a straight line would extend only one inch.

In the animal kingdom the sex-instinct serves solely

the purpose of propagating the species; in the human race, as we have seen, the same instinct, while primarily it serves the same end, becomes also the instrument for accomplishing another and more distinctively human object, viz., for giving rise to and expressing the most intimate affection between the sexes, knitting two beings together in closest sympathy, and uniting them in a bond which is not merely physical but spiritual. Nevertheless, the *act* in which this affection is sealed and symbolised is, like all sacraments, itself physical; it is the self-same act by which nature brings about the coalescence of the male sperm-cell with the female egg, namely by sexual intercourse, though such coalescence (conception) does not, of course, by any means follow each such act. "In order that the sperm-cells may be brought into such a position that they may of their own feeble powers of locomotion reach the egg in the womb," writes Dr. McDougall,* "the male is provided with the organ of intromission (the penis), and the female with the vagina or sheath, the antechamber to the womb. . . . It is necessary that the organ of the male shall enter the antechamber of the womb, and that emission of the sperm-cells shall not take place until this is accomplished. . . . On its executive side the male's instinct is complicated in such a way that he is impelled to embrace the female and to introduce his organ to the vagina, and thereupon to execute movements which, by stimulating the highly sensitive skin of the organ, excite the emission of the sperm-cells. . . . The activities of the male reach their natural end with the emission of the sperm-cells; and in the female the embrace culminates in a peculiar activity of the internal sex organs which facilitates the approach of the sperm-cells to the egg in the womb, and which, like

* "Social Psychology," pp. 390-391.

the act of emission in the male, constitutes the climax and termination of the sexual act (the orgasm). In both sexes the activity of the sex-instinct is supported by a powerful impulse and accompanied by an emotional excitement, which, when the process of fertilisation runs its normal course, waxes throughout, attains its climax at the moment of orgasm, and then suddenly subsides."

On this descriptive account, very properly explicit as it is, some qualifying comment is necessary. In the first place it must be insisted that in human beings as distinct from animals the sex-act is by no means simply a "process of fertilisation," but that, on the contrary, its "prime object is *union*—the physical union as the allegory and expression of the real union—and generation a secondary object or result of this union" (Carpenter). And in the second place, not only does the woman not necessarily experience any emotional or sensory climax in the conjugal embrace, but we repeat that many women of our race, though they bear child after child, never have this reaction at all, and pass through matrimony without ever having known the transport which accompanies the completion of the act in the man's case; and this not from any constitutional insensibility, but from causes which, once they are understood, can as a rule be remedied. On this topic we have already said something, and shall have yet more to say, for it affects the happiness or unhappiness of wedlock perhaps more profoundly than any other single factor.

In any case, however, it may as well be frankly stated that the first union, or initiation, will not be pleasurable but rather the reverse for the bride; and the fact that this must needs be so ought to add tenfold to the bridegroom's considerateness—for, after all, no man likes hurting the woman he loves. In the first place the prospect of having the sanctuary of her per-

sonal intimacy invaded—her vague anticipations of something she cannot picture—will have frightened her and induced a highly nervous condition. But in the second place the consummation of the conjugal act will involve the rupture of the membrane (the hymen) at the entrance of the vagina, and this membrane may offer no inconsiderable resistance to the male organ, though in this respect different individuals vary greatly. The act of penetration is by no means dangerous, but it is necessarily more or less painful, and, moreover, is accompanied by the breaking of numerous tiny blood-vessels, causing an effusion. We cannot help thinking that some more enlightened age, less obsessed with the barbarous notion of this "token" of merely physical virginity—not by any means a sure token, since the membrane is often accidentally ruptured—may obviate the clumsy process of sheer violence by a slight surgical operation shortly before marriage. It is extraordinary, by the way, how many men are totally unaware of the existence of the hymen, and the necessity of its perforation before union can take place.

There is, however, yet a third circumstance which may materially contribute to the bride's discomforts; and since in this book we have no use whatever for half-truths or concealments, we shall state the facts without apology. When a woman is emotionally ready for union, but not till then—when her affection is deeply stirred, and she herself desires the conjugal embrace—certain physiological reactions take place: the vagina becomes tumescent—in a woman of ardent temperament it may even spontaneously open its lips—and a secretion of mucus will lubricate its wall and entrance, in order to render the introduction of the male organ easy and painless. But on the occasion of a girl's initiation, of all others, these phenomena will not occur, owing to the state of her feelings; consequently the male

organ will seek to effect a forcible entrance into an opening that is unlubricated and too small for its admission, and the whole process will be both distressing and, to any sensitive mind, disgusting in its suggestion of downright brutality. A soothing emollient should, in mere humanity, be used; and the same simple expedient will often prove most helpful on later occasions. The bride should be encouraged, by yielding herself to the embrace of her husband and repressing signs of fear, to render the act as easy as possible for the man she loves and desires to make happy; the bridegroom should be admonished to be most gentle, most tender, most lover-like in the first full consummation of his love.

That such advice should require to be given to any man may well appear strange, for the brute who has no consideration for the feelings of a woman—and that woman his new-made wife—is happily very rare; still, we know that this kind of counsel is greatly needed, and if followed would save much unhappiness. So much harm is done for want of a little knowledge. Sometimes a man errs from sheer impetuosity, and loses his head under the influence of sexual excitement; sometimes he has had pre-marital experience of bought "love," and this stands him in bad stead, positively misleading him when he approaches a pure girl. For the courtesan opposed no physical obstacle, in the shape of a hymen, to his advances; moreover, she had not to be wooed at all—it was she, rather, with her professional knowledge, who stimulated him, who met his overtures more than half-way, and by cleverly acting transports of passion heightened his own. He compares her instant readiness with his bride's reluctance, her tears, her lack of response, and perhaps then and there endorses the quite untrue dictum he has heard some "man of the world" pronounce—that the worst of good women is that they are so cold! He cannot understand

why it is that his bride has so evidently felt no pleasure at all in the embrace, and tells himself that he has married an iceberg. That there is fire beneath that ice, fire which he has not the wit, the skill, or the intuition to kindle into a white flame, he does not know; he is only disappointed, though as a rule he will keep his feelings to himself.

But if he is rather to be pitied for his ignorance, it is at least true of him that he has "done his part, had his pleasure," that he has known the exaltation of the senses which accompanies, and the physical relief which follows, union. Hers is a far less enviable fate; to her the transition from girlhood to wifehood has only brought physical pain, nervous disarray, and too often a bewildered sense of rough usage, with no compensating satisfaction whatever. If such be her case, is it to be wondered at if she dreads a repetition of an experience which she has so little enjoyed, if her husband's renewed approaches find her as reluctant as ever to comply with his desires—nay, if she begins to plan ways, to devise pretexts, for avoiding these unwelcome intimacies as much as possible? Can we be surprised if she, too, is dominated by a sense of disappointment, a feeling of having been somehow cheated? Perhaps her comfort will eventually be that of the excellent French spouse who declared that while to her the conjugal act never brought any gratification, she found her happiness in making her husband so evidently happy by her compliance; even more probably she will come to echo the further declaration of the same good lady, "*Ces choses-là tiennent, en somme, peu de place dans la vie d'une femme*" ("These things occupy, all in all, a small place in a woman's life"). It is a drab and dreary conclusion; and it is not a true one. Love and passion are great things, and are meant to occupy a great and glorious place in the lives of men and women alike;

how such realisation may be achieved, how our wedded lovers may enter in and receive the kingdom of joy prepared for them, we shall discuss in the next chapter.

One counsel of perfection we must needs give in closing. Let the bridegroom be in no hurry to snatch the fruit from the tree of life; if he will proceed gradually, if he will accustom his bride little by little to intimacies of sight and touch and endearment, if he will woo her with patient and tender affection, knowing when to desist, the fruit will ripen and taste the sweeter for the brief and not unbearable delay he has imposed upon himself. It is not only not necessary, but it is not desirable, that the full transition should take place in the first night. He will never have cause to regret his self-subduing chivalry; and she will never forget that he spared her maiden modesty and forbore to take instant advantage of his "rights" and her helplessness, preferring to melt rather than to break down her reserve. Is it not worth while to exercise a little self-restraint in order to create such an impression, and to retain such memories of the beginnings of married life?

CHAPTER VII.

ADJUSTMENT.

We will now assume that our two fellow-navigators have "crossed the bar"—in other words, passed through the stage of initiation and the trying period of the honeymoon—without signal disaster. We speak of that early period not as it is conventionally envisaged, as one of unalloyed bliss, but as likely to be particularly trying; and it stands to reason that it should be so. For any two people to be suddenly thrown into the closest and most continuous contact, to have to adapt themselves mutually to a score of idiosyncrasies, to determine almost every detail of their conduct in reference to each other's will, is about as severe a test as can be imposed on human nature. Moreover, these new shipmates have not only, as already stated, to learn nearly everything concerning each other, but also concerning the craft they are destined to sail.

It is not at all likely to be "plain sailing" at first, and those who in their blithe inexperience may expect nothing but summer seas and fanning zephyrs had much better make up their minds for some stormy weather. The art of living together harmoniously is a great and difficult art, and only to be acquired by those who are prepared to pay the price in much mutual concession, a great deal of patience, and some occasional opportune blindness. One is reminded of the sentiment of an old-fashioned character in a play of the last generation, who observes that he allows every married couple twelve months for what he calls "the shaking-down process";

he and his wife, he says, led a very cat-and-dog life during their first year—but after that they shook down.

There is probably a good deal of rough truth in this observation; but too often, it is to be feared, the accomplishment of the shaking-down process only means that two people have gradually reached the point of resignation, the point of definitely lessened expectations, definitely abandoned dreams and ideals. Having suffered a variety of disillusions, they are now ready to make the best of a not very prosperous bargain—to "put up" with things and with each other.

And again and again, could we probe the situation to the centre, we should find that the root of married disappointment—a disappointment none the less deep because in the majority of instances it is not vocal—lies in the conjugal relationship itself. The most shallow, the most prosaic of mortals have their glimpses of romance, have seen the gates of Paradise ajar, and enter marriage in the hope of finding the vision take on concrete shape for themselves. They have known, or at least they have heard, of couples who really found fulness of joy in each other, who experienced a common rapture that lifted them to the seventh heaven—and they wonder why such a fate should not have been their own. They may have read—for people still read poetry—such burning lines as those which describe

> The moment eternal—just that and no more—
> When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
> While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet,

and marvel whether all such talk is mere imagination, or why, if it depicts something true and overwhelmingly real, it should not be true of and for themselves. Good feeling and real kindliness may repress the formulation of a conviction which, though unavowed, is there and grows, till in spite of themselves it takes definite form, even if it never passes the lips—the conviction that some-

how, for some reason which eludes their ken, they have not found in marriage what they sought. They try anew, only to be conscious of renewed failure; it is a case of

> Bitterly we re-embrace,
> Single still.

Our diagnosis of the trouble must be in the most direct language, or it will necessarily miss its mark. Beginning with woman's side of the case, we say plainly and categorically that for her the great cause of marital failure is summed up in sexual unsatisfaction. She has had frequent unions with her husband, she may even at times have experienced desire for union, but the act itself has given her neither thrill nor relief, because it has led up to no sensory or emotional climax for her; it has, on the contrary, left her wakeful, nerve-racked, a prey to vague irritability and depression. Instinct tells her that this is not as it should be, that there is something wanting, something that is essential; reflection adds its voice to that of instinct, and declares that such results as these are not worth the discomfort and risk involved —the discomfort of pregnancy, the risk attending childbirth.

While exact figures are in the nature of the case not available, it is estimated that seven out of every ten married women of the English-speaking race experience no climax in the conjugal embrace, corresponding to that which in man accompanies the discharge of the semen; for this multitude of wives this embrace is something they undergo in satisfaction of their husbands' wants, but without any satisfaction to themselves—rather with such consequences as we have described. While in the man the exaltation of the senses, the giving forth of his stored-up vital energy, has produced its beneficent reaction, followed by the exhaustion of sleep, the wife will vainly strive to close her eyes, or stare into the darkness with a sense of grievance, bitterly reflecting on the un-

fairness of a division which gives all the pleasure to one partner, while reserving all the risks, involving life and death, for the other. For him the sensory transports, the balm of slumber, the happy forgetfulness—for her the unsatisfaction, the tortured nerves, the fretful vigil "beneath the suffocating night," the while he draws long and tranquil breaths by her side.

Now under these conditions—and let us remember that they are *common* conditions—one of two things is likely to happen. The wife who feels that her sex is merely the badge of her servitude—that which destines her to be the instrument of pleasures which she does not share—will be disposed in any case to reduce the occasions of union as much as possible, making little or no secret of her distaste for intercourse with her husband. She will plead indisposition, headaches, anything to avoid the conjugal "fatigue duty"; possibly she may revolt for good and all against it, and insist upon "being left alone." Or, and this is the more usual alternative, she will submit to marital relations quite passively, performing her wifely duty with undisguised apathy, as something which, "if it were done when 'tis done, 'twere well 'twere quickly done," her one hope being, as a rule, that at least it may not result in yet another baby. What we want the masculine reader to understand is that this is the natural and necessary way in which the matter will present itself to the wife placed as so many wives are, her emotions unthrilled, her nerves raw and frayed, her fears aroused by the possibilities of unwilling motherhood.

But if a wife who refuses herself to her husband invites matrimonial disaster, it is no less certain that no man appreciates union with a woman who remains unmoved and listless in his arms, and that the merely passive, dutiful, submissive but frigid spouse will speedily fail to attract him. Her apathy damps his

passion—precisely as it is intended to do; surely, he tells himself—and so far he is quite correct in his surmise—there ought to be some reciprocity in the feelings aroused by so uniquely close an embrace! Even instinct tells him this, and instinct is possibly confirmed by recollection of some previous experience of real passion, passion on both sides, deep calling unto deep, and calling not in vain. He may even begin to torture himself with quite unjustified suspicions, wondering whether the coldness his wife displays towards him may not have its explanation in very different feelings aroused by and reserved for another.

This, which we have described, is the common starting-point of married unhappiness. Husband and wife are disappointed in each other in that aspect of their relationship which adds what Mr. Havelock Ellis calls "a secondary, yet peculiarly sacred and human, object of marriage" to its primary animal purpose of procreation. He may obtain the purely physical relief which in any case attends the completed act, but there never is that sense of the mystic union of soul with soul, the merging of identity with identity, which is the crown of perfect love, and the existence of which even those who have not known it themselves cannot help guessing at. And, dissatisfied with each other in that central point, the rest follows "in a concatenation accordingly"; for that which they miss in each other, nothing else can make up for.

Let the plain truth be plainly and warningly stated. It is the man who has what he calls a frigid wife at home, with no ardour answering his ardour, suffering his caresses without returning them—palpably, unconcealedly apathetic—who will sooner or later be tempted to seek consolation elsewhere; and while such a course must evoke the reprobation of the moralist, it will hardly excite the surprise of the student of human nature. For

a person who feels chilled to turn to warmth where it beckons him, is an instinctive gesture, almost automatically performed. Many wives would have retained the fidelity of their husbands if they had realised what it was that the latter missed in them, viz., some spark of passion, some show of interest in their conjugal relations. A man of any refinement of feeling may even of his own accord cease after awhile from making obviously unwelcome advances to a partner whose every movement indicates her aversion to them; and it is under such conditions, rather than from innate masculine viciousness, that a good many extra-matrimonial intrigues begin.

So crystallises the situation we have already described in an earlier chapter of this book: on the woman's side a genuine inability to comprehend why her husband should attach such supreme importance to something which makes no appeal to her, or why he should feel aggrieved when she denies herself to him time after time; on his, the sense of his marriage having gone wrong at the centre owing to the fact that his wife, notwithstanding her possession of many admirable qualities, is a "non-conductor," lymphatic, devoid of passion.

What he does not know, in coming to that totally erroneous conclusion—what would surprise him immensely to be told, and is yet the truth of the matter—is that *it is he himself who is at fault;* that he, and no one else, is the cause of the non-responsiveness which he deplores in his wife. He does not know that the possibilities of passion, which with him lie always near the surface, in her case are covered by many strata, some of them superimposed by training and immemorial custom, through which he must learn to penetrate ere he can hope to kindle the spark that will flash an answer to his spark. He does not know what many males of the lower species know and practise instinctively—and nothing more decisively proves the insufficiency of in-

stinct in the human race—viz., that the feminine desire for union always requires to be stimulated by preliminary acts of wooing, by manifestations of affection, by all the delicate arts of courtship, which between wedded lovers should include words of love, names of endearment, dear intimacies of caress. These are the indispensable pre-requisites of *every* conjugal embrace; and for a man to proceed to the enjoyment of his so-called rights without this prelude, without playing one or more of these variations on the eternal love-theme, omitting what in very truth is essential, is to invite disappointment, and, incidentally—not to put too fine a point on it—to prove himself a tactless barbarian.

He may honestly harbour the notion—("There are plenty . . . men, you call such," to quote the poet!) —that by marrying this woman he has entered into "possession" of her, and that henceforth she is at the beck and call of his desires; well, he had better disabuse his mind of that delusion for good and all. He may be like the husband whose wife rallied him, with a smile on her lips, yet rather wistfully, on the fact that he was no longer paying her the little attentions that had marked the period of their engagement, and who replied quite ingenuously, "My dear girl, you don't expect me to run after a 'bus when I've caught it!" Never was there a more fatal error, and probably there is none more common, than the naïve assumption on either a man's or a woman's part that courtship comes to its destined end at the altar and that once two people are married they may spare themselves all further efforts of fascination. Just because marriage inevitably contains a good deal of very prosaic prose, it needs if anything a double infusion of life's poetry. A woman will draw bitter parallels between the lover that was and the husband that is—the one who begged tremulously for the smallest favour, overjoyed if he might kiss her hand, the other

who asks in a matter-of-fact way for the supreme privilege, and then, forsooth, is displeased because she cannot produce a passionate response to order!

Nothing can justify such a claim; and one who, in a matter of such delicacy and, indeed, such sacredness, simply presents a demand for what he is pleased to consider his dues, must not be surprised if his demand is met, at best, in the spirit of anything but enthusiastic duty, which differs by the whole diameter of being from a spontaneous going and giving forth. One recalls Calypso's splendidly scornful outburst in Stephen Phillips's "Ulysses":—

> Duty! O, hath it come to duty now,
> Duty, that grey ash of a burnt-out fire,
> That lie between a woman and a man!

Yes, in a good many marriages that is all it "hath come to"; and it is not in man to be content with "the grey ash of a burnt-out fire" in lieu of the divine radiance.

The true lover will be least in danger of going astray in the manner just indicated; just because in his own case physical desire will be far more deeply interfused with psychic elements, with tendernesses, longings ineffable which only one other being can still, with memories immortal and sublime, he will divine a good deal of what is needed to prepare and attune his beloved, both psychologically and physiologically, for the rite which celebrates and reaffirms their oneness. Thus he will rouse in her in a thousand subtle ways the desire which blends with his desire, till it can find only one mode of expression, and both by a common consent fill and empty the cup of nuptial joy. Each act of union must be preceded by such wooing as will awake the yearning that slumbers in the woman's soul; only when this preliminary has been fulfilled is there any likelihood of her finding in the conjugal relation that exaltation of body and spirit which it is meant to minister To

approach a woman who has not been thus prepared, and whose own inclination does not prompt her to the love-act, is to debase a sacrament into a sacrilege; a sacrilege which brings its own unfailing punishment.

But even this is not all—though an important part—of what a husband has to learn. It is possible for a woman to enter upon union with the requisite desire and yet to derive from it no proper physical or emotional reaction analogous to that which visits her husband; indeed, this is a common occurrence, entailing consequences injurious to her nerves and her whole system, which is denied the relief which should resolve the tension produced by what has gone before. The simple though largely unsuspected truth is that *just as a woman's sex-impulses are more slowly aroused, so her climax is more slowly reached than a man's.* There are exceptions to this rule, but they are exceptions only. The man will, under normal circumstances, reach the culminating point within two or three minutes, discharging the vital flow, after which, his desire being assuaged, he will withdraw from the embrace. Now hardly ever does the corresponding climax visit the woman within anything like so short a time, the result being that for her the act is uncompleted when withdrawal takes place; she is thus, after being "strung up," left unsatisfied, and her last state will be worse than her first, as must happen when a desire has been aroused without being appeased.

So much being understood, the question presents itself, How is this maladjustment—this unequal rate of progression, for which neither man nor woman but nature is responsible—to be remedied? There appear to be two ways, and two only.

On the one hand the husband may impose such restraint upon himself as deliberately to postpone his reaction until it synchronises with that of his wife. This

course, however, seems open to grave objections. There is plenty of room, as we have seen and insisted, for sexual restraint, even within married life, but hardly in the conjugal act itself, where spontaneity is of the essence of the function's wholesome performance; to hold up the climax, which in the nature of things would supervene with imperious force of its own accord, means the imposing of a severe and probably injurious strain upon the nerves and the emotions alike, at the very time when both are already being considerably taxed.

We turn, then, to the other alternative, which is perfectly simple and perfectly practicable. It is that the husband, having had his reaction, instead of withdrawing from the embrace, should continue the union and the movements appropriate to it, until his wife arrives at the climax without which conjugal intercourse cannot bring her the satisfaction, either physical or psychic, for which her nature calls out. To remain a while longer in that close clasp which but a few minutes before he sought so eagerly, to maintain the swaying love-rhythm of motion in order to secure for his wife the counterpart of those sensations which she has but just afforded him—this is scarcely a demand with which he should find it difficult to comply, and the result would be in countless cases to change a supposedly frigid into a warm and glowing wife, and a discontented and neurotic into a happy and healthy woman.

Let this expedient be tried by those husbands who have imagined their wives to be incapable of response, mysteriously devoid of sexual sympathy, and they will witness their Galateas come to life. This, indeed, is but the elementary requital they owe to their partners, viz., to make them taste the ecstasy they themselves know, but which, when shared, gains a new intensity and sacredness; and after the ecstasy the blissful sense of fulfilment, the happy swooning into uttermost content.

In such simple fashion may one of the most serious conjugal maladjustments be corrected, and one of the commonest sources of marital unhappiness find its cure.

Not always will a wife respond—because she is not always able to respond—to her husband's wooing; in her the sex-tide ebbs and flows, sinks and rises, and it is for him to observe the "signs of the times," not difficult to read for the vigilance of love, which proclaim that her tide is at the full, and that she herself will welcome his approaches. This will happen, provided she is in normal health, during two periods, each extending over several days, in each month, as a rule shortly before and after the menstrual flow, and these are obviously the destined seasons for union; while when her love-tide is at its lowest, and when she consequently has no natural inclination for marital relations, chivalry, hygiene and even commonsense dictate that he should refrain from seeking what she would not gladly and of her own accord consent to grant. His impulses will grow more intense under this temporary repression, and when the time comes round the nuptial rites will be celebrated with renewed ardour on both sides.

This is far better than to lay down any mechanical rules as to the desirable or permissible frequency of intercourse; the one true rule is that a husband's sexual urgencies must wait their satisfaction so as to coincide with those of his wife. This is precisely to invert the bad old plan, which, on the convenient assumption of woman's merely passive rôle, considered the man's desire alone, prescribing or sanctioning, say, two unions each week—whether welcome or unwelcome to the "weaker vessel," who, owing to that very weakness, was denied the right to be consulted in her own most intimate concerns!

It remains to speak, with all becoming brevity and frankness, of one other important adjustment which must be considered in connection with this subject, viz., the position in which the conjugal rite is best performed. No universally applicable rule can be formulated, and every couple must discover the mode which ministers the maximum of comfort and happiness to them. But for many reasons which reflection will suggest, and particularly because it is that which expresses the complete equality of the lovers, we submit that the ideal way is that in which they will rest side by side, their heads on one pillow, lips touching lips, and heart beating against the beloved's heart. This we conceive to be the method most suited to civilised men and women, whose very passion is governed and kept sweet by gentleness; thus, without force or violence, rather with infinite tenderness, may the perfect embrace be accomplished, being melt into being, and soul unite with soul.

It is in such wise, we hold and strongly recommend, that married lovers should crown their vows.

NOTE.

On the permissibility and expediency of conjugal intercourse during pregnancy opinions differ widely, and will continue to differ for a long time. With the merely ecclesiastical point of view, which sanctions marital relations solely as a means to the end of procreation, and would entirely forbid such relations once this end has been secured, we are not concerned, except to repudiate it. What does concern us is that the desire for union does not miraculously depart from the husband whose wife is about to become a mother, and that the same desire may be quite normally active in her during the greater part of that period of expect-

ancy. For obvious reasons it is most undesirable that intercourse should take place in the traditional position when a woman is pregnant: of the best alternative to that position we have spoken above. A wife who tenderly loves the father of her unborn child will not wish to subject him to an undue strain by depriving him of access to her for a longer time than is absolutely imperative, knowing something of his physical necessities and the outlet they seek after; and even when complete connection is not practicable, or when to grant it would be injudicious, love will find a way.

CHAPTER VIII.

" NOR CUSTOM STALE. . . ."

> In the garden of love is a snake. It is the Commonplace. Stamp on its head, or it will destroy the garden. Remember the name. Commonplace.
>
> Jack London, *The Valley of the Moon.*

The English traveller in Italy, on entering some Cathedral, is occasionally shocked to find a Mass being said in an utterly soulless, mechanical way; the words are gabbled at top-speed, and the priest's main object seems to be to get through his task as expeditiously as possible, while the foreign onlooker feels that something which should be holy at least to those who profess to believe in it is being profaned at the very altar. What has happened? Time was when the performance of those rites was deemed a glorious privilege by the same ministrant, then young and enthusiastic, who now hurries through his recital, his mind palpably elsewhere; but use-and-wont has done its deadly work, and what was then a holy mystery is now just in the day's work part of a routine which barely disturbs with a ripple the surface layers of consciousness.

But if our tourist will search his own experience, he may be inclined to find extenuating circumstances for the priest, hastily mumbling words which by dint of sheer repetition have ceased to convey any meaning to one who could recite them in his sleep—who has been half asleep many a time that he has done so. There was that tune which once upon a time so enraptured him—the tourist—that he could not rest until he knew every note of it from beginning to end: first he had

been fascinated by it, then obsessed with it, presently he had become used to it, a little later he was sated with it, and in the end he grew genuinely tired of it! And when he remembers how seldom he looks at the pictures on his walls, pictures every one of which he had bought because they delighted him, he will better understand why, *e.g.*, the natives of some glorious spot never glance at the wonderful panorama at which he gazes transfixed with admiration. That jade-green water, those solemn mountains, those romantic prospects surpassing all his dreams, move them not at all, because their eyes open on that view every day that dawns; yes, and if he, instead of being a mere passing visitor, were to live in the same surroundings for a year, over him, too, custom would assert its deadening sway.

Is it not obvious that all we have been saying applies with tremendous force to the subject of married life? There is no test so severe as the test of uninterrupted companionship. Two people who, as a rule, have seen far too little of each other before a certain date, are from that date onward plunged into an intimacy in which they are likely to see rather more than enough of each other, and that at the closest range. What, under circumstances of such unceasing contact, in the course of years spent *vis-à-vis*, may we expect to happen? Their greatest danger is not that of a violent clash of temperaments; friction there may be, probably will be, at times, but human nature is very adaptable, and real incompatibilities are rarer than one might imagine. No, the danger is rather that within a few short years they will have become fatally used to each other, that his presence will have ceased to hold any surprise for her, or hers any freshness for him; they will have settled down to a life of jog-trot routine, unfreshened by surprise, unstirred by emotion. And yet, when they look back

to the feelings with which they set out on their quest, when they recall the love that drew them together, the hopes which animated them then, they will avow, somewhat ruefully, that this pedestrian commonplaceness was scarcely what they expected to find in wedlock. Like scores of thousands of respectable couples, they are the victims of familiarity, of domesticity, of soul-deadening custom.

This is the disintegrating, obliterating force to be held at bay, the enemy that is too often allowed to do the mischief ere he is recognised as such; for it is easy to yield to habit, and difficult to hold out against its influence. Where two persons are so continually together as in married life, their only chance of escaping the bad effects of custom is to recognise in it from the outset the adversary they must subdue or be subdued by; they must understand that every soul requires a certain amount of breathing-space, free from any other's immediate proximity, lest it die of suffocation. They must learn that the dearest lovers will gain, not lose, by being occasionally parted for a spell—that such temporary separations will be the very means of renewing their sympathy with and appreciation of each other.

It is just their closeness, so sweet and comforting in many respects, which, unbroken, destroys their perspective. She was a wonder to him ere he wedded her, but now she is only his wife, whom he perfunctorily kisses night and morning; and as for the other side of the account, how many of the men who deserve a certain amount of appreciation, receive it anywhere rather than at home? It is custom that dulls the vision, that blinds us to the significance of things, that deadens us to every appeal, be it of beauty, pity, reason, charm, sublimity, or any other.

Custom will take away the glow and exaltation even from the love-union of husband and wife; it, too, be-

comes a matter of routine, a sorry travesty, a gabbled liturgy, a holy act profaned. Here is yet another justification of that practice of self-restraint which we so strongly pressed upon husbands: it is immeasurably better for conjugal intercourse to take place too seldom rather than too often, and habitual indulgence becomes the grave of love. Unbridled greediness finds its inevitable punishment in satiety; appetite is surfeited, and that which may always be had for the asking soon ceases to be even desired.

And now let us exercise our imagination, and listen to what the serpent—the snake in the garden of love—has to say to the woman. He is not a regular inhabitant of the garden, but merely a visitor. Dragging his slow length along, and well filled with his delectable diet of dust—(this is an allegorical serpent, of course!)—he calls upon the woman one afternoon, in a weak hour: what medieval writer was it who called three o'clock in the afternoon "the faintest hour of the day"? The first few introductory phrases exchanged, he raises his ugly flat head from the ground, and holding it sideways in an ingratiating fashion, remarks sympathetically, "I wonder at your giving yourself so much unnecessary trouble."

"What do you mean?" says the woman, but in her heart she knows quite well what the serpent is alluding to, only she wants to hear him say it explicitly.

"What I mean, my dear . . ." replies the serpent, ". . . If I might uncoil a little—— "

"Oh please do!" says the woman.

"What I mean is simply this," says the serpent, uncoiling, "you've *got* this man now, so why bother any more? You are married, you see, and he can't escape you. There was some sense in your studying your appearance and dress before and even while you were engaged; you couldn't be sure of him then, and

there's many a slip. But all this daintiness used to cost you a good deal of effort, thought and time; and now that it is no longer necessary, now that the key has turned in the lock—you remember the snap?—why continue the exertion? Besides, you have other responsibilities now, and sometimes you are very tired; moreover, a married man does not notice these things. Believe me, any old dress is good enough to receive him in when he comes home in the evening; he is only your husband, not your lover. He knows you inside out, as you might say"—here the serpent simpers a little—"so why be particular with him? By all means let your complexion and figure go, just as your music has gone already; the care of hands and teeth and hair—you were rather proud of your hair once—is very exacting, and you have plenty else to think of. Besides, what is the object? You are a good wife, and do not want to attract anyone else—and a woman need not trouble to attract the man she has got. For conversation, you have an unfailing theme: regale him with a full account of all your domestic worries, taking care to omit no details; you have wrestled with them all day, and it is only fair to work them off on him—the things that have come home spoilt from the laundry, the rudeness of the butcher, Ellen's extravagance in the kitchen, the difficulty of getting cauliflowers. (He *eats* cauliflowers, so why shouldn't he hear about them?) You used to discuss a book with him occasionally when he was courting you—at times you even read something together; but now, instead of cultivating your mind, which is a fag, you need read nothing except the picture papers, and have no 'interests' whatever. You are married, and that makes all the difference. That was all I dropped in to tell you; I hope you won't mind."

As a matter of fact the woman does not mind at all, for the serpent's advice coincides exactly with her own

inclinations; it appeals to that bodily and mental indolence—a kind of reaction from the sprightliness of girlhood—which besets so many women once they are safely landed in matrimony. This is the feminine counterpart to the fatuous masculine idea of married life, that "one need not run after a 'bus once one has caught it." The serpent knows perfectly well, of course, what pernicious advice he is giving, his express object being, as ever, to ruin paradise; and in his cold snake's-heart he hopes that his counsel will be acted upon. He has heard the cynical saying, "Formerly a man married many wives—this was called polygamy; now he marries one—this is called monotony," and he knows that that jest is ever on the lips of men whose wives have acted on the instructions of which he has just delivered himself. So, his purpose achieved, he brings his afternoon call to a close and rustles away, leaving the woman pensive.

"A pretty garden," he says sneeringly, giving a backward glance, and then adds to himself, "It won't look so pretty presently, or I'm much mistaken." That evening the woman receives her husband in an ancient and untidy wrapper; she has not had the energy, she explains, to dress—and, anyhow, what does it matter? They aren't expecting anybody!

Let us drop allegorising, and come to plain, stark facts. The fundamental fallacy so pathetically believed in by multitudes of wives is that woman's enterprise in the domain of sex comes to a triumphant close when she has induced a man to marry her—that, having "got" her husband, all the apparatus which proved so successful in that quest may be safely and conveniently put aside. Why she should imagine that the charm and freshness which were such important assets before marriage are thereafter superfluous and dispensable luxuries, passes comprehension; they are, if anything, *more* im-

portant, *more* indispensable, if only her indolence would allow her to realise the fact. We repeat what we said on an earlier page—just because marriage inevitably contains a good deal of prose, it requires a double infusion of poetry. Any callow girl can win a man, given determination and opportunity; but to keep him when won is an undertaking which taxes all a woman's wit, resource and unsleeping vigilance.

This is the real problem of a woman's married life; but problems cannot be solved by those who are not even aware of their existence. Woman is sufficiently handicapped by nature, in that her sex-attractiveness leaves her at an age when a healthy man is by no means past the ardours of sex; to anticipate the process of disintegration, to grow *passée* before her time by neglecting to make the best of herself in looks and attire while she is still able to charm, is nothing short of folly.

For it is simply not true that a man—just because he is married—"does not notice these things" in a woman just because she is his wife. Why should he have suddenly developed this blindness and insensitiveness? The plain truth is that he is just as fond as ever of the qualities he admired in his wife when he went courting her; and when the dainty girl of a few summers ago deteriorates into a slatternly woman who does not care how she looks when it is "only he" who will see her, and who goes about at home in faded blouses doubtfully fastened down the back, in draggled skirts and down-at-heel slippers, he is likely to develop "home-sickness"—of the wrong sort. This feeling will be deepened if she lets her mind go to seed, and if her store of conversation is limited to the domesticities, to dull gossip, and she declines to be interested in anything outside that narrow circle.

She forgets that he goes out into the world day by day, and there meets not only men but other women;

she, who as a girl had so keen a sense of possible rivals, is sublimely impervious to the fact that among these other women encountered by her husband there will be some who are well-dressed, good-looking, bright and vivacious, possibly well-informed or even brilliant. Inevitably, almost unconsciously and without disloyal intention, he falls to drawing comparisons—and, alas! they are not in his wife's favour.

He remembers the lady traveller who called on the firm that day, and whom he had to receive and talk to for ten minutes until the chief was disengaged; a smart business woman, how perfectly she was dressed, and what a combination of sparkling intelligence with feminine grace! He is a good, decent fellow, without a thought of flirtation; yet, before he has realised it, the thought has taken shape, if only for a moment—"What a pity Mary does not try to keep herself a little more up to the mark!"

Or he may belong to a less impeccable category of husbands, and in that case the trim little shorthand typist who takes down his letters, the laughing waitress who serves his lunch, any of the attractive types of femininity with whom he is brought into contact, may capture affections which—not entirely by his fault—are not securely anchored at home. It is a common, all too common—a human, all too human—story, and why a wife should voluntarily discard her weapons of self-protection, voluntarily abandon her rôle of lover, and become a drab domestic companion, at the evil advice of the serpent called Commonplace, is truly a matter for marvel.

Just because man is not *naturally* monogamous, a woman who wants to retain her husband's undivided affection will shun drabness, monotony, staleness, as the very plague. She will think it worth while to take trouble, to be inventive, in pleasing his eyes, just as

she used to do in the days when she awaited his arrival in a flutter, wondering if she was looking her best; he is the same man he was then, and she must hold him by the same arts—even the same artifices—that won him. It will repay her to surprise him into admiration, to adorn herself for his sake, to rekindle the glances that used to tell her that he thought her fair, to practise a few of the blameless ingenuities of love; and if she is wise she will ward off at all costs the defacing, disfiguring hand of slovenly custom, refusing utterly to become the thrall of dun-visaged use-and-wont.

Let us here quote some words, worth pondering, of the author's who furnishes us with the quotation heading our chapter: "Variety! There lies the magic. 'Tis the golden key. A wife must be many wives. If you would have your husband's love, you must be all women to him. You must be ever new, with the dew of newness ever sparkling, a flower that never blooms to the fulness that fades. You must be a garden of flowers, and the man must never pluck the last of your posies. It was the freshness and the newness of your beauty and you, the mystery of you, that won your man. You must make your love-life an unending chain of victories. Each day you must win your man again. And when you have won your last victory, when you can find no more to win, then ends love." Let not age prematurely wither a woman's charm, "nor custom stale her infinite variety."

There is yet another aspect of our subject which demands particularly frank discussion. We would say to any young married couple: "*If you want to kill romance, disregard modesty.*" Romance cannot live in an atmosphere of gross physical familiarity, nor long survive the performance by husbands and wives of all kinds of private acts in each other's presence. Yet it is a fact

that there are plenty of women from whom, once they are married, all the modesty so rigidly enforced during girlhood drops for good and all so far as their husbands are concerned—wives who discard the reticences one would have thought instinctive, and both in word and act throw all reserve to the winds.

It is a woman novelist of distinction, Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes, who propounds the somewhat startling theory that women in matters of the flesh are less addicted to delicacy than men; certainly it is true that some women will discuss—will gossip over—the intimate details of their love-life with a freedom never practised by men. We would say most earnestly that there is no greater mistake than this vulgarisation of love either in speech or act, this tearing away of the last veil which shrouds, ever so diaphanously, the ultimate privacies, the ultimate secrets. That two wedded lovers should take intense pleasure in the sight of each other's unclad bodies, in all their strength and grace, floating in the embrace of sea or river, will arouse no feeling of distaste in any healthy-minded person; but when one hears of such cases as, *e.g.*, young husbands and wives habitually using the domestic bath in company, performing all the necessary but unæsthetic processes of ablution, the soaping and scrubbing, under each other's eyes, decency sorrowfully veils her head, and affronted love prepares to put out his torch.

This brings us to the much-debated question of separate or common bedrooms. After the most careful consideration of the matter, we give our decision emphatically in favour of the one shared sleeping apartment. That a husband should visit his wife's room only on the occasions when he desires union with her cannot be deemed an ideal arrangement; that his very presence should thus announce his intentions must produce something of a revulsion on a woman of refine-

ment, indisposing her for the conjugal rite. On the other hand, we would strongly insist on the desirability of separate beds, not touching each other, but divided by a curtain or screen. There will thus be opportunity for the tenderness, the dear confidences, the happy unconstraint, with which each day should close; but there will be also that amount of privacy which is each individual's birthright, and which it is not well nor wise to surrender. And most certainly each should carry out the operations of the toilet unseen by the other, simply because these proceedings are inevitably deficient in dignity, beauty, æsthetic character. Romance, once tarnished by the undignified or grotesque, like the iridescent sheen on a butterfly's wing once defaced, is gone for ever.

We have in this chapter addressed ourselves predominantly to women, not by any means because they can be said to have a monopoly of the error which spoils marriage by making it commonplace, but because they are specially beset by circumstances which predispose them to make this mistake—a mistake which is apt to exact particularly heavy penalties from them. Let a wife firmly repel the temptation to let herself go as regards either looks or attire or mental alertness, whether for the sake of comfort, from love of ease, or under the mistaken impression that appearances and the like no longer matter in the case of a married woman. If she has children, let her never forget that, holy as is the passion of motherhood, her happiness lies in her ability to retain the love of her husband, and that man's love is rooted in a physical foundation. And every day let her repeat to herself the truth that it is Commonplace which destroys love's garden.

With this axiom firmly grasped, she will keep her garden tended and fragrant and sweet to walk in, hand in hand, in the cool of the evening.

CHAPTER IX.

"THE WORLD WELL LOST"?

> The fact is that too many of us make marriage the mausoleum of love instead of its shrine. We padlock insecurely with rusting iron a pledge that can be tightly held by gossamer silk. We dance into matrimony as if it were a fairy ring; and then we allow it to turn upon us like a janitor, saying to us, "Escape for a second if you dare." And there you have the psychology of why those who would never stray out of an open circle break vows and hearts to escape a prison."
>
> TWELLS BREX, *A Conqueror of Death.*

In an earlier chapter of this book we quoted the remark made in one of Mr. Bennett's plays by a middle-aged woman who is explaining why she deliberately refused chance after chance of marriage: "They were all the wrong men," she says. "Fancy pouring out tea every day of your life to the wrong man!" An appalling thought, an appalling prospect, no doubt: but is the thought of pouring out tea every day of one's life even to the right man to be entertained altogether without trepidation or misgiving?

Says the brilliant and lovable writer—too soon taken from us—whose words head this page: "I will ask you to make a mental list of all your acquaintances, friends and relatives, and pick out a single one of them with whom you would essay the experiment—irrevocable when once made—of living year in and year out under the same roof, sitting for ever at the same table, turning over for ever that outworn stock of impressions and subjects that are the inevitable conversational store of

people always together; fretting each other for ever with the moods, mannerisms, whims and peculiarities that you sometimes find tiring in your most esteemed friends for such short times as you are thrown together. Yet marriage is an infinitely closer, more continuous and inseparable bond."

Every now and again the public attention is claimed for long and solemn discussions on "How to Brighten Cricket." Would it not be at least as important to discuss the topic of "How to Brighten Marriage"? That is the theme with which we propose briefly to deal in the present chapter; for one of the principal dangers besetting wedlock is the sheer unmitigated dullness that threatens to enwrap in its shroud-like folds two people who have entered into an engagement to pass the rest of their lives, till death them do part, in each other's company. And while cricket is a sport in which it is not absolutely obligatory to take a personal interest, marriage is the inevitable destiny of the majority of people who reach maturity.

L'ennui, voilà l'ennui. We do not care how devoted a couple may be to each other, they will be very extraordinarily constituted if the fact of being constantly in each other's society will not at times fill them with a trembling apprehension of boredom; if they are never secretly conscious of a desire to escape from that overmuch, over-close "togetherness"; if they do not long now and again for a change—a change of the most blameless kind, but still a change. We have spoken of the slow corrosion, the slow attrition, of custom; it remains that we should now consider that theory of marriage which is responsible, more than anything else, for this same corrosion, this mutual blunting—the theory which produces those innumerable "resigned" couples, just rubbing along together, looking on whom young people ask themselves, "Is that what we, too, shall

come to if we marry? Is there no more joyous, more inspiring alternative?"

The totally mistaken theory which, when put into practice, produces these dismal results is that which, in effect, declares that when two people who are mere beginners in the art of life enter into marriage, with the world lying as yet unexplored before them, they ought henceforward to be so entirely sufficient to each other as to leave no desire for any outside interests. She is all in all to him, and he to her; not only are they to find supreme joy and satisfaction in one another, but the very thought that they might need or wish to derive any joy or satisfaction from any other source is treated as a kind of high treason.

Now this conventional idea of the mutual all-in-all-ness of married people has the one serious drawback, that it does not correspond to the facts of life or of human nature; and where human nature is forcibly adapted to such a preconceived notion, the adaptation leads, not to the enrichment but to the crippling and stunting of human lives. For while it is true that the youth and maiden who marry from the right motive feel, and feel intensely, that the chosen mate is the one being in union with whom they can hope for the highest happiness, that is a very different thing from the dogma which holds that man and wife ought to fill the world for each other. To act in good faith on this assumption is to narrow one's horizon quite insufferably, is to invite staleness, vacuity, boredom, stuffiness; while for one partner to be conscious that the other expects him so to limit his outlook and interests is to feel a sense of irking fetters —and along with this will often be born a desire, first vague, then ever more definite, to break them.

The fact is that man is not made to live healthily or contentedly in so circumscribed an environment; and if he tries it he does violence to the laws of his being,

with the result that he shrinks and dwindles and declines. Calypso may do her best to keep Ulysses in silken bonds of ease and dalliance, sure that he ought to be satisfied with her love alone, glad to be done with perilous sea-wanderings; but she does not read the hero's heart aright, blinds herself to the presence of ineradicable instincts in him, and when at last she grows aware of her error, and challenges him to tell her the truth, he flashes forth the magnificent confession:—

> Then have the truth! I speak as a man speaks,
> Pour out my heart like treasure at your feet.
> This odorous, amorous isle of violets,
> That leans all leaves into the glassy deep,
> Palls on my heart. Ah, God! that I might see
> Gaunt Ithaca stand up out of the surge,
> Yon lashed and streaming rocks, and sobbing crags—
> To spring alive upon her precipices,
> And hurl the singing spear into the air;
> To scoop the mountain torrent in my hands,
> And plunge into the midnight of her pines!

Ulysses voices the aspirations of every manly man; love, for him, even though it be the peak and pinnacle of life, is not enough to fill existence. Make it an enclosure, a walled garden, insist that he ought to be content to dwell within its bounds, and he will secretly repine or openly rebel against a decree which spells paralysis for him. It is probable that the theory of what we called all-in-allness—a theory which would reduce married life to a two-headed egoism, and that of the dullest kind—is itself the outcome of a still older error, according to which man and woman enter at marriage into a species of ownership-contract, whereby the woman becomes the man's property. She is his, and his exclusively, and loses from the marriage day onwards any individuality she may ever have possessed. Just as she adopts his name, so she is expected to take on the mould of his opinions, to become what he chooses to make of her. If at any time she should so far forget herself as to

assert views that run counter to his, she will, when she comes to her senses, humbly ask her lord's forgiveness:

> Teach me, only teach, Love!
> As I ought,
> I will speak thy speech, Love,
> Think thy thought—
> Meet, if thou require it,
> Both demands,
> Laying flesh and spirit
> In thy hands.

We shudder at the downright abjectness of such a capitulation, which we feel to be unworthy of a human being; but we may be sure that the generation which first read these lines, somewhere in the middle of the last century, did not shudder at all, but thought the sentiments they expressed very proper and edifying.

So radically false a view of woman's position in marriage could not but produce corresponding reactions. If the Church, the law and public opinion united to pronounce her entirely and absolutely her husband's, she would unofficially but very effectively lay down the dogma that her husband was also entirely and absolutely to be hers, and hers alone; or, as she expressed it, that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander. If, once she had become a wife, it was understood that her horizon was bounded by the domesticities, she declared in turn that she did not see why her husband should enjoy any wider vistas. And it is this temper, this mistaken notion of what marriage should be, that has reduced it in countless instances to a drab and monotonous affair, a relationship unlighted by a gleam of generous sentiment, its stuffy atmosphere unfreshened by a breath from the great outside world.

It is instructive to observe how the unwarrantable theory which treated the wife as in effect her husband's property brought unfailing retribution upon those who had framed it in their own interest. For the adoption

of that theory was bound, in practice, to spell reciprocity. The more implicitly woman accepted—as the average woman did—her husband's almost unlimited rights over her, the more would she be inclined to assume and assert analogous rights over him, and to see to it that those rights were enforced. On her reading of the case, she, being utterly and unreservedly his, was entitled in return to claim his undivided attention and continuous society, and to resent anything—any extra-domestic relations or interests on his part—which seemed to interfere with those claims. The wife of this type honestly believed that her husband ought not to want any distractions or recreations apart from her; if he did want such, that constituted a legitimate grievance. "He has *me*—whom or what else can he require?" That question, uttered or unexpressed, summed up her firm conviction.

And the worst of it was that just because her outlook had been deliberately narrowed down, she was really less fit than need have been the case to replace those friendships, to share those tastes, which she grudged her husband. He could not talk to her about matters, enlist her intelligent interest in subjects, which he himself had declared to lie outside her province as being "unwomanly." He had decreed that she should be as ignorant, as conventional, as insipid, as, *e.g.*, Thackeray's good women invariably are; he was to reap the full benefit of her ignorance, her conventionality, her insipidity, in an unbroken matrimonial *tête-à-tête*, denied the chance of variety or escape. If he was "cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in," he had but himself to blame; she might bore him and know that she bored him, but that was no reason why she should let him stray beyond the petty bounds within which she herself lived and moved and had her being.

Thus there came into existence that stale and stag-

nant bourgeois interior, with its utter lack of grace and vitality, presided over by two people who had long since exhausted the only topics of conversation—that dull home, with its fly-blown respectabilities and banalities, its shibboleths and pretences, which has been so mercilessly satirised by a whole school of dramatists from Mr. Shaw downward, and from which it is the settled resolve of the younger generation to emancipate themselves, whether by stealth or by open rebellion.

It was only to be expected that the misconception of marriage as a property-contract—at first one-sided, but later made reciprocal—should make itself most strongly felt in all that pertained to the possible relations between a married man or a married woman and a person of the other sex. It was held to be safer to deprecate such relations altogether and to assume that they *could* not be innocent. And here one must say quite candidly that a great deal of the jealousy which darkens so many marriages is not even prompted by any feeling worthy to be called love, but springs at most from self-love, from wounded vanity, from an outraged sense of ownership, the infringement of a monopoly: "How dare she—how dare he—be interested in anyone but ME?" It is not love which speaks thus, but the instinct of clutch, which is one of the meanest of motives. And this motive will generally be most strongly manifested where it is combined with the perception that the "me" in question has somehow failed to share the interests or ideas which draw those other two into that animated conversation. To people of this calibre it appears simply scandalous, absolutely wicked—something which should be forbidden by law—that a man should be capable of enjoying the society of a woman other than his wife, or a woman that of a man other than her husband.

Now it has to be frankly and truthfully admitted

that this kind of resentment is more frequently exhibited by a woman than by a man; and most frequently perhaps by a woman who has given way to that indolence of which we spoke in the last chapter—who has allowed her mind to run to seed, and instead of trying to care for the subjects which mean much to her husband takes her stand on her "rights" as his wife. She forgets the times when he tried in vain to induce her to read such-and-such an article, attend such-and-such a lecture or meeting; she forgets her contemptuous refusals to "bother about that kind of stuff"—and now she is excessively angry that he should have come across a woman who *has* bothered about it, and is able to hold her own in discussion with him. She, his wife, considers herself affronted; and he will hear about his behaviour, too, that very evening.

Let us come to the plain commonsense of the matter. There is no such thing as property in persons; no two people can be, or ought to be, so mutually all-sufficing as to feel no need for any relations with other people of either sex. No two individuals can or ought to call the world well lost even though the closest and tenderest tie unites them; and there is not a word to be said in extenuation of the miserable jealousy which contracts what should be a beautiful bond into a galling bondage. On the other hand, now that women's education has been broadened and their outlook on life is no longer limited by custom as was their grandmothers', a great deal might be urged by way of advice to wives: to keep their minds alive and wakeful, to rouse themselves to an intelligent participation in their husbands' interests; advice which, if followed, will keep them their husbands' best friends and companions. The doll-wife and the drudge-wife may find herself neglected by the man who wants something else than a drudge or a doll; not so

the wife who is her husband's real mate, who shares his life in the fullest sense, and is the counsellor to whom he turns before any other.

Not that there is, or need be, the slightest harm in a mutually stimulating *camaraderie* between men and women not married to one another; on the contrary, there should be, and in time there will be, much more of this, as our attitude towards sex becomes less fevered, more healthy. Moreover, while husband and wife, if they are in truth wedded lovers, stand in a unique relation of mutual tenderness and confidence, this need not render either of them preternaturally unappreciative of fine and admirable qualities in all other men and women. In a sane society it will be a commonplace that a man may frankly enjoy an hour in the company of a woman other than his wife, or a woman in that of a man other than her husband, without a thought of flirtation or atom of disloyalty on the one side, or mean suspicion and degrading jealousy on the other. To the attainment of that standard, which more than many other things will prove our right to call ourselves civilised, all married couples should resolve to make their own contribution.

It cannot be too clearly recognised how ugly is the spirit of mere possessiveness in marriage; it cannot be too strongly insisted that the aim of wedlock is not that two persons may mutually monopolise, but that they may mutually complete one another. And it cannot be too frankly admitted that the perpetual "togetherness," as we called it, of any two human beings, no matter how sacred their relation, imposes too great a strain to be quite wholesome without an occasional relaxation and corrective. All healthy natures—in order to remain healthy—need a certain amount of privacy, an occasional change of environment, and now and then even a spell of solitude; and the best and most recuperative of all holidays for husband and wife may now and again be

a holiday from each other, a season of separation, from which they will return with renewed mutual longing and appreciation of each other.

For neither man nor woman should marriage mean the surrender of independence of thought, a yielding to the domination of another mind. It should not be deemed necessary for husband and wife to see eye to eye on all subjects; the ideal state may even be that of seeing *everything* from slightly different angles, so supplementing and correcting each other, as one eye supplements and corrects the vision of its fellow. But even if there is actual diversity of opinion on this or the other matter, all generous natures should be able to make allowance for such divergencies, and refrain from the very thought of crushing another's individuality, or taking offence at having to listen to an independent voice, and not an echo. One knows the couples—indeed the households—where only one opinion ever exists on any question, because only one is ever allowed to exist, any differences being treated as a kind of *lèse-majesté;* this, too, is merely a relic of barbarism which is steadily growing rarer, and will in time disappear altogether. Already we see—and this is all to the good—a yearly increasing number of instances where husband and wife have each a sphere of activities outside the home, each taking a friendly and intelligent interest in the other's field, without either jealousy or interference: how much better, this, than the dreary narrowing of two existences, due to a misconception of what marriage ought to be, and the mutual rights it ought to confer.

To sum up, no human being can be, or should claim to be, "all the world" to any other human being; the Wisdom which has framed our manifold natures has endowed every individual with a multitude of diversified needs, not all of which can find, nor are meant to find, their full satisfaction in just one other fellow-creature.

And just because love is so supremely great, we ought to have no hesitation in declaring that it is not enough. It is the greatest thing in the world, but not the only thing in the world. It never has been man's, and should not be woman's, "whole existence." For the complex adventure of marriage it is at once the indispensable and insufficient equipment. Like the colours on the painter's palette, it requires to be mixed with brains in order to produce the perfect picture. Among the chief and choicest ingredients of Wise Wedlock will be a quick and lively intellectual sympathy between the two partners, mind playing on mind, and thought flashing messages to kindred thought. Where such conditions prevail, affection will grow and strengthen with the years; and where minds as well as hearts are wedded, there will be least room for, or fear of, "the great passion of little souls," abhorrèd jealousy.

CHAPTER X.

VOLUNTARY PARENTAGE.

I.—In Theory.

" . . . And hardly had the nurse left and the household returned to its normal arrangements, and life was clear again, and all one had to do was to go ahead, when she began to have her second child.

In seven years Ingeborg had six children. A rather dismal rain of discomfort soaked in and dimmed the brightness of things. The children that were there suffered because of the children that were soon going to be there. It was a pity, she thought, that when one produced a new child one could not simultaneously produce a new mother for it, so that it should be as well looked after as one's first child had been.

Of her six children Robertlet flourished, and so did the sister who came after him. The next two died. Then they took to being born dead; two of them in succession did this; and it was after the second had done it that Ingeborg reached the lowest depth of vitality. . . ."

The Pastor's Wife, by the Author of "Elizabeth and her German Garden."

The desire for children is part—and a most precious part—of the normal endowment of humanity, a holy and beautiful desire, the granting of which has ever moved humanity to passionate gratitude. There is no cry in the language more rapturous than "Unto us a child is born," nothing that so exalts us with a sense of the full unfolding of our nature as this, the fruition of love. While the object of human marriage, as we maintain, is by no means confined to the propagation of the species, there can be no doubt that a wish for parenthood commonly enters, whether consciously or un-

consciously, into the motives prompting men and women to matrimony—though it is only natural that as a rule the maternal should be stronger than the paternal instinct.

Where there is deep mutual affection, there both partners will yearn to behold the visible token of their union, the outcome of their mingling of body and soul, in that miracle of love made manifest, a dearly-loved child; and even where there may not have been such intense affection in the first place—or where, alas! it has withered and died—the child often bestows a blessing and a compensation which make life not merely bearable, but irradiate it with a glow of real happiness. "Give me children, or else I die"—this outburst of Rachel's has been echoed by many a woman otherwise happily married.

Until recently it was thought that the number of children to be born of any marriage, and whether they should follow each other in quick succession or at longer intervals, were matters not determinable by human agency, but resting in the hands of what some called Providence, and others chance. A delicate woman might, and often did, find herself condemned to almost annual confinements, emerging from each such ordeal progressively weakened and losing all the comeliness as well as the natural vigour belonging to her age; and if the family doctor finally declared that she must not have another baby, such a pronouncement was tantamount to a decree—to her, how welcome an order of release!—prohibiting all further conjugal intercourse as endangering her health, and perhaps her life. That parentage could be *voluntary*, that the birth of children could be subject to deliberate *control*, was not dreamed of until—comparatively speaking—the other day.

It will be well that, before we go further, certain

important facts relating to potential and actual fertility should be briefly set forth. In the lower forms of life offspring is excessively numerous, but only a very small proportion of the young survive long enough to become parents in turn; this is the stage of "nature red in tooth and claw," where the defenceless are preyed upon and devoured in such quantities that out of the myriads produced only a tiny fraction escape destruction. Such is the prodigal method of nature, determined that the species shall, if possible, not die out, an object which will be achieved even if there is only a *slight* balance of the total number brought to life over the total number destroyed in infancy. The more we ascend in the scale, the more we find the enormous fruitfulness of the inferior creatures to abate, because there is no longer the same occasion for it—fewer are born, but of these a larger proportion survive; the birth-rate, however, is still considerably higher among savage tribes than among civilised mankind, for the ravages of warfare, famine and pestilence can only be repaired by rapid breeding, and even of the children so born a very large proportion die in their early years.

It may be laid down axiomatically that a low civilisation, or a low stratum in a higher civilisation, presents the uniform phenomenon of a high birth-rate balanced by a high infantile death-rate. It is among the thriftless and shiftless classes that we find the largest families, as it is in the slums that we find the type of woman who claims to know all about the upbringing of children, having buried seven of her own! The thoughtful, the educated, the refined, have notoriously far fewer children than the freely-propagating inferior stocks, but they keep alive a far greater proportion of those that are born to them.

It must be clearly understood that nature, left to her own devices, aims merely at the survival of the species,

resolved that however many units may die off, still more shall be born; and the worse the conditions for survival, the greater are the numbers sent forth to fill the constantly-renewed gaps. What is even more remarkable is that the least valuable strains—the diseased, the degenerate, the mentally defective, the alcoholic—show the most marked tendency to multiply and pass on their undesirable characteristics to their swarming progeny. Well may the poet sing:—

> And fear not lest Existence closing your
> Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
> The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has poured
> Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour.

Let us try to realise something of the prodigality with which the "eternal Saki" pours his bubbles of potential life from his inexhaustible bowl. For the purpose of conception all that is required is that one male sperm-cell should unite with one female egg. Conception, of course, is by no means sure to follow intercourse, and but rarely does so; but each sex-act liberates several hundred millions of male sperm-cells, only one of which, at most, enters the womb by its tiny aperture, and fertilises the female ovum, while all the rest have been formed and are ejected, only to be wasted. It is as if all the artillery in the world should be discharged in the indefinite hope of one possible hit at one solitary target.

Again, in order that a woman may have a family which cannot exceed quite a moderate number at most, her ovaries have been stocked with some sixty-four thousand eggs, every one of which is capable of being fertilised, but only a minute proportion of which will even so much as pass into the womb—one each month during the period of her capacity for child-bearing—there to await their chance of fertilisation; a chance which

rarely comes in a lifetime, and may not come at all. Charles Lamb's Chinaman, who burnt down his house in order to enjoy a meal of roast pig, was a severe economist compared with nature forming billions of sperm-cells and scores of thousands of ova for the possible production of a few babies.

Now conception may take place on the first occasion of conjugal intercourse, or it may not take place till after years of married life; it may be an annual phenomenon, or it may never occur at all. It may come to pass whether the woman is physically fit for the strain of pregnancy and confinement, or whether she is in a debilitated condition, which makes the prospect of motherhood a nightmare; whether the parents are in a position to support another life, with its numerous wants, or whether they are already hard put to it to make ends meet; whether, in short, they *wish* for another baby or not. The question arises whether it would not be better, supposing it were feasible, to substitute for this fortuitous process one of choice and deliberation; so to arrange that children should be born only when their birth is desirable and desired; to make parentage, in one word, voluntary. To this subject of birth-control we must now more definitely address ourselves.

Those who condemn the prevention of conception *a priori* do so on the ground that such methods interfere with nature; that they contravene the divine order, and constitute an act of rebellion against the divine dispensation; or that they violate the principle of the sacredness of life, *i.e.*, of the potential life which they destroy. It will be well to consider these pleas one by one.

(i.) "Interfering with nature" is a question-begging term. Those who use it as an argument against birth-control forget that civilisation as a whole is, in one sense, a series of such interferences. In seeking the

protection of clothes against cold and damp, in erecting the simplest human dwelling, in all our inventions and discoveries, we "interfere with nature," making its forces serviceable to our needs instead of grovelling in helpless servitude to them. "Life according to nature" is a dream, and not a wise one, as its realisation would be the reverse of pleasant. We interfere with nature when we cut our hair and nails, when we deflect the lightning which would destroy our houses, when we devise preventive measures to protect ourselves against her myriad plagues. It is mere want of logic which would bid us shrink from similar acts of interference by controlling births, if to do so is in the interest of mankind, and makes for the furtherance of human welfare.

(ii.) Coming to the second plea, we do not for one moment believe that it is the divine will and order which manifest themselves, *e.g.*, in the notorious fertility of consumptives, epileptics, the feeble-minded, and similar undesirable strains. Clearly the whole matter is one for enlightened human regulation; it is not the divine dispensation, but the want of human intelligence, which allows children to be born to exhausted and sickly mothers, or to form additions to families whose means of subsistence are already strained to breaking-point. To suggest that under such circumstances the only proper course is total abstention from conjugal intercourse is to propose a remedy which it is hard to think the proposers themselves believe in, and which, whatever theorists might wish, will never find acceptance. Besides, parentage is too solemn a responsibility to be incurred in a merely haphazard manner; and there are many instances, as we shall show, where it cannot and ought not to be undertaken at all by people who nevertheless are devotedly attached to each other, and whom only fanatics would dream of depriving of the relation in which love finds its fullest expression.

(iii.) Finally, as regards the sacredness of potential life, we have already seen how prodigally, and at the same time inevitably, potential life is sacrificed in *every* act of intercourse, when hundreds of millions of sperm-cells are wasted and given over to destruction, on the mere chance that one single unit out of these myriads may fertilise an egg. Preventive methods, after all, merely extend to this one sperm the fate which nature assigns to all the innumerable rest! (Here let us point out and emphasise the vital difference between the prevention of conception, which is entirely harmless, and all attempts to destroy the unborn infant once conception has taken place. The latter sinister practice flourishes most where methods of prevention are not known, and where frenzied women, unable to face the prospect of yet another confinement, seek out the services of the professional abortionist.)

If it be urged that the use of preventives offers too easy a way of escape to those who desire to shirk the burden of parenthood from motives of selfishness—a subject to which we shall return*—it should perhaps be said that such incurably selfish persons are hardly fit to exercise the function they decline. Without at all sympathising with people of this type, we may still think it best that unwanted children should not be born into a loveless atmosphere. There really is nothing to be said for the curious idea, half-consciously held by some good but narrow individuals, that people ought to have babies by way of retribution; moreover, we may as well recognise the fact that those who intend to use preventives, from whatever motive, will do so.

And now let us look at the alternatives to birth-control, where, *i.e.*, the birth of children is not desired,

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* See Chapter XI., pp. 136-138.

and where preventive devices are either not known or regarded as reprehensible. The family income does not allow of the expense another baby would entail; or the shortage of houses interposes a stern and effective veto; or the wife's constitution has been drained by previous confinements, and another must not be thought of. The couple, being disinclined for the use of preventive appliances, will then resort to one or other of three expedients. They will time their unions to take place during that part of the wife's lunar cycle when her liability to conception is generally thought to be at its lowest, viz., the "middle" ten days or fortnight; or they will practise *coitus interruptus*, which means withdrawal just before the seminal discharge takes place; or the wife will categorically insist on the total cessation of conjugal relations.

Not one of these expedients is to be recommended. The first-named not only condemns the wife to a merely passive rôle in the marital act—in which she might very likely be quite prepared to acquiesce—but it is totally unreliable; conception may take place at *any* time during the month, and where there is the definite and well-founded desire to avoid it, it is obviously not enough merely to diminish the risk to some greater or lesser extent. The second method—that of the interrupted union—is open to objections alike on the grounds of æsthetics and of health. On the former of these it is not necessary to dwell, since they will occur to anyone using a modicum of imagination, but the latter call for a word of explanation. Briefly, the act, carried just so far as to secure the husband's physical relief, but cut short before the wife has obtained any nervous or emotional reaction,* leaves her in a condition of acute unsatisfaction, and where this practice is habitually re-

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* Cp. Chapter VII., p. 80.

sorted to, it becomes one of the most fruitful causes of neurasthenia in women, with all its attendant unhappiness; and since we have reason to believe this procedure to be exceedingly prevalent, we would utter our emphatic warning against it. Those who make use of it may point to its efficacy so far as the immediate object is concerned, and, moreover, they may lay the flattering unction to their souls that they are not using appliances or preparations; nevertheless, what they do is far more of a violation of nature than is involved in the use of the latter expedients, and is apt to prove gravely injurious to woman's nervous organisation.

It is probably after the first of these methods has failed—after the birth of a baby conceived during the "unlikely" period—that a wife resolves on the extreme step of refusing her husband all further conjugal relations. She simply will not, for the sake of his pleasure, expose herself to the risk of yet another year of ill-health, with a climax of extreme physical suffering, and all the toil and restrictions that lie on the farther side. She has borne enough, and she will bear no more; he *must* see her point of view—he *must* leave her alone.

It is impossible to withhold one's sympathy from a woman who pleads that she has reached the limit of endurance; nor can we doubt that any chivalrous and considerate husband will feel that under the circumstances he simply cannot press his advances on an unwilling partner whose remembered agonies make her shrink with genuine terror from the prospect of a repetition of the like tortures. And yet, comprehensible as is such a decision on a wife's part, we can but reiterate our belief that it is a profoundly mistaken one, and fraught with the greatest danger to the happiness of both husband and wife.

This severance, once accomplished, will inevitably set up estrangement between those who should be the

closest associates. They will begin to "live their own lives" instead of each merging his or her life in the other's; and the flower of conjugal love, which has its root in complete union, will be apt to wither if torn from that soil. Moreover, a virile, ardent man will not suffer a state of married celibacy gladly, and since his wife will not, or cannot, be more than a wife in name to him, there will always be a danger of his turning elsewhere for the satisfactions denied to him at home. Many wives, much-tried as they are, would be less precipitate in taking so exceedingly grave a step if they realised this danger from the first, instead of doing so after it had materialised—especially since there exist other and better means for achieving the immunity they seek.

Where, then, assuming birth-control to be practicable, should we pronounce it justifiable?

(i.) There are many unions from which children ought not to be born, because one or the other of the potential parents is hereditarily predisposed to some disease which it would be a crime to risk handing down to their offspring. Where a family's record tells a tale of cancer, tuberculosis, insanity and the like, it should be sternly remembered that the fundamental right of the unborn is to be well born; nothing can excuse those who knowingly bestow the dubious gift of life on beings who would seem predestined to so evil a fate. Dr. Benjamin Jowett, the great Master of Balliol, used to tell of a friend of his, a man of high integrity, who always wore a ribbon of black velvet round his right wrist, in order to remind himself that he had no right to marry and bring into the world children who would start the race of life handicapped by a hereditary flaw. So resolute a spirit was highly honourable to the man who displayed it; nevertheless, to-day we should say that, unless he had contracted venereal disease, or dreaded

insanity for himself, he need not have denied himself the solace of married life, so long as he dealt quite frankly with the woman he asked to be his wife, and provided that both agreed on taking the requisite means for preventing the birth of children.

(ii.) There is an extremely numerous category of couples whose combined means—both being wage-earners—might enable them to get married, but who could not live on the husband's income alone, nor, above all, afford the "luxury" of children. Should such as these, then, put off marriage till the man's circumstances have so improved that they may take the risk of having a family? We emphatically think not. If they are really sure of themselves and of each other, there are "reasons and reasons" why they should not waste priceless years in a drawn-out engagement, nor delay giving each other the happiness which they can only find by joining hands and lives. We agree that their joint existence would probably be more complete if they could have a child or children of their own; but since children are for the time being out of the question, why should they make their lives *less* complete than they need be? "Youth's a stuff will not endure"; let them not wait till the glow has departed from their hearts, till their individualities have become so set as to make mutual adaptation difficult, till the vision splendid has faded into the light of common day. By all means let them marry, continue their work while it is necessary that both should earn, and simply postpone having their child or children until the time when parenthood shall become economically possible for them. Birth-control places the means in their hands for doing this, and so will save them that desiccation one has so often observed in couples whose engagement has lasted too long, until the very spirit that brought them together has taken flight.

(iii.) We are inclined to recommend that in most instances the birth of the first child should be deliberately postponed till the end of the second year of marriage. The first year demands so much from the new-made husband and wife in the way of mutual adjustment, that it seems undesirable to add to the problems they already have to solve the further complications of pregnancy and confinement. The young wife, especially, has to "find herself" physiologically, to adapt herself to her new functions, and this takes time; the young husband, having but just entered into possession of his treasure, should be allowed to enjoy his happiness for awhile undisturbed, before he is called upon to endure the deprivation and separation which the coming of a child will of necessity impose on him. Having had at least this first year to themselves, and with knowledge and assurance gained, they will both be better prepared to become parents than immediately after marriage.

(iv.) After a child has been brought into the world, birth-control should again be resorted to and maintained for at least a year—preferably for an even longer period—in which the mother may recuperate from the stress she has endured; indeed, for the child's own sake it is of the highest importance that the mother should be able to give it her undivided attention during the first helpless stage of its existence. Nature alone will not secure such a breathing-space to the married woman, whose life may become a nightmare of successive child-beds, the burden of responsibility growing heavier with each new, unwished-for arrival, till at last she sinks beneath it. It is too pitiful that any woman's married life should be summed-up in such a form as is done in the paragraphs quoted at the head of this chapter. The proper use of preventive measures will save her from unnecessarily frequent experiences of childbirth, which will make her an old woman before her time;

and while she will be able to devote herself more effectively to a smaller than to a larger family, the fulfilment of the marriage rite will be unaccompanied by fears and misgivings on her own and her husband's part. Who can doubt that this tranquil happiness is to be preferred to the unrest, alarms, repressions which make up the wedded life of those to whom the possibility of another child is a perpetual menace?

(v.) And this is merely to say that birth-control is not only justified, but a plain duty where means are limited, where the improvident enlargement of the family would spell cramped conditions of living, a poor bringing-up for the children, an unceasing, wearing struggle to provide the bare necessaries of subsistence. A great deal of romantic cant is still being talked about the beauty of large families, often by people who are alive to the advantages of huge supplies of cheap labour and cannon-fodder; but the advocates of unlimited breeding as a rule do not practise what they preach—often, indeed, they are unmarried—or they possess incomes amply sufficient for all the children they are likely to have. But for the majority it is surely a duty to have no more children than can be brought up in reasonable comfort, with decent educational facilities, in surroundings which will leave a fair image and not a blot upon their imaginations. To say it once more, the fundamental right of the unborn is to be well born, into an environment which will give them a chance.

(vi.) It has been shown again and again, not only that a large number of childbirths exhausts and enfeebles the mother, but also that the later-born children of large families are apt to prove of inferior calibre and stamina, and that the rate of infantile mortality among these late-comers is greatly in excess of that obtaining among the earlier-born; indeed, as we have already said, wherever there is a very high birth-rate, it is balanced

by an equally high infant death-rate. Now since in the matter of human births we are concerned with quality rather than quantity, and since it is the worst of waste for children to be born only that they may fill little graves, we suggest that no woman who has borne five or six children at the most should add to that number. She has already given amply to humanity, and given her best; and by bestowing her mother's love and skill upon her existing children she will do better for them and deserve better of the world than by bearing others. It might suit a Napoleon to declare that the greatest woman was she who produced the most numerous offspring; but we know that Napoleon on the one hand wanted to snub Madame de Staël, who had been fishing for a compliment, and on the other we know too well what he wanted numerous offspring to be produced for —*chair à canon,* to have the honour of serving in his wars and falling in his battles.

We repeat that parentage, just because it is so great and holy an office, is one that should only be undertaken voluntarily, with the same free and joyous assent of both partners as marriage itself. Every one can understand something of the tragedy of the unwanted child when it has an unmarried mother; but we should realise that there are hosts of unwanted children born in wedlock—though not in Wise Wedlock. It has also to be recognised that there are many people who, while they may be admirably suited to each other as love-mates and even life-mates, have no vocation for motherhood and fatherhood; it is assuredly better for all that such as these should have no children than that they should prove indifferent parents. "I was fitted to *become* a mother to the boy, but not to *be* a mother to him," says Ibsen's Rita Allmers, rightly distinguishing between a merely biological and a spiritual endowment, the latter of which she lacked.

In any case, birth-control has come to stay, in spite of misunderstandings and prejudice, as is proved by the falling birth-rate throughout Western Europe; and its advent represents a mighty step forward in the slow march of civilisation. We think it well within the limits, not only of possibility but of probability, that the civilised countries of the next century will be inhabited by a smaller but a happier population; that reckless and indiscriminate breeding will have been as definitely relegated to the outworn customs of barbarism as the pagan practice of exposing superfluous infants; and that our more fortunate descendants, as they look back to the bloody wars and fierce struggles for mere subsistence due to the unchecked multiplication of competing myriads, will say of their forbears, in pity rather than in condemnation, "They knew no better."

CHAPTER XI.

VOLUNTARY PARENTAGE.

II.—In Practice.

> Like the wizard's lazy apprentice who foolishly released the stream he could not control, we have struggled vainly to stem the tide of unfit babies, and now at last we have learnt the magic formula to apply at the source.
>
> HAVELOCK ELLIS, *Essays in War-time.*

In what has gone before we have endeavoured to clear the ground by showing that in a multitude of cases the prevention of conception by harmless methods—supposing such to exist—is not only justified but may be morally imperative. For the matter of that, even in conservative religious circles, it is no longer held as a dogma that the unlimited multiplication of the unfit represents the will of God, or that a woman enfeebled by successive childbirths and married to a husband who earns a precarious livelihood, ought to go on bearing feeble children who, if they survive infancy, will merely go to swell the burden of our social problems.

Since there is no likelihood at all of mankind adopting the remedy commended by well-meaning but ignorant fanatics, viz., the suspension of marital relations except for purposes of procreation, we have therefore to face the question as to the ways and means of preventing the conception of children whose birth would endanger the mother's health or prove economically

disastrous. This, to say it once more, must not for one moment be confounded with the offence of destroying the embryo of a child once conceived in the womb; the latter malpractice, though widely prevalent, stands condemned alike in law and morals, and such attempts are liable to a fatal termination, while birth-control, when resorted to for such sufficient reasons as have been stated, is open to neither moral nor legal censure.

The problem of birth-control, on the executive side, resolves itself into that of preventing any one of the countless myriads of sperm-cells contained in the seminal fluid which in the completed sex-act is discharged into the vagina, from entering into the womb and there uniting with the ovum awaiting its possible fertilisation.

We have already spoken of two common methods by which this end is sought to be attained—the restriction of intercourse to the "middle" fortnight of the wife's lunar month, and that of withdrawal the moment before the actual discharge of semen takes place. Of these, the former is not only totally unreliable, but has the disadvantage of limiting what should be an act of mutual tenderness mutually desired to that part of the wife's cycle when such desire on her part stands at its minimum, and is likely to be non-existent. She may acquiesce for her fancied safety's sake, but with an ever-deepening impression that her function is simply that of a passive instrument for the selfish gratification of masculine sexual passion. On the pernicious effects of *coitus interruptus* we have expressed ourselves with the necessary frankness, and can only repeat our warnings against this deeply injurious practice.

A common belief is that a woman enjoys immunity from conception while she is suckling a baby, and many mothers accordingly prolong lactation unduly in order to be a little longer insured against the risk of yet

another pregnancy. The immunity conferred by nursing is, however, by no means absolute or assured, there being many exceptions to the rule; while in suckling her child beyond the period when her milk is of real nutritive value, a mother will both injure the child and debilitate her own constitution.

Very widely held, finally, and that quite erroneously, is an implicit faith in the efficacy of douching for the prevention of conception. A moment's reflection should suffice to show the unreliability of this proceeding. Not only must it, in the nature of the case, be postponed until after intercourse has taken place, and the semen injected into the vagina, with the possibility that some enterprising sperm-cell has straightway entered the womb; but there is the further possibility that the douche, no matter what pattern of enema is used, may actually float the sperm to the destination it would not otherwise have reached—inward instead of outward—and thus directly cause instead of preventing conception.

Moreover, few things can be less beneficial to a woman's health, or more destructive of any poetry and romance such as should characterise the conjugal embrace, than for her to rise immediately the act is accomplished and to busy herself with warming water and using the enema, when she ought to abandon herself to that feeling of utter relief which is the harbinger of healing, dreamless sleep. Returning to bed chilled, with a sense of discomfort, and uncertain as to the result of her douching, she will ask herself with a feeling of disillusion, "Is it worth it?"

Quite apart, however, from the uncertain physical effects of douching, we would strongly emphasise its certain and detrimental æsthetic effects; we can but repeat, as particularly applicable in this connection, the warning given in Chapter VIII.: "If you want to kill romance, disregard modesty. Romance cannot live in

an atmosphere of gross physical familiarity, nor long survive the performance by husbands and wives of all kinds of private acts in each other's presence." There are proper occasions for the use of the enema, but as a "contraceptive" its use is to be deprecated.

What then, if any, are the methods which may be recommended as hygienic, unobjectionable and effective? We may say at once that there is no one method which guarantees absolute success, just as there is no brake which may not refuse to act at the critical moment, no boiler which may not explode, no ship which is unsinkable; above all, there exists no "fool-proof" contrivance, nor one which may not in careless or impatient hands lead to disappointing results. We can but use the *best* contrivances, and these with the utmost care, thus eliminating the chances of misadventure, and ensuring that practical certainty with which we have to content ourselves in all other enterprises. As we walk down the street, a tile *may* be blown down from a roof and kill us; but we do not immure ourselves at home in order to avoid so infinitesimal a risk. Similarly, we can but say that with the exercise of ordinary care and good sense the risk of mishaps in the use of contraceptives may be reduced to the infinitesimal, and birth-control successfully accomplished, especially if two methods of prevention be combined.

The one object to be achieved will be the interposition of an effective obstacle between the male sperm and the female ovum, hindering the one from reaching and fertilising the other. Either, that is to say, the aperture of the womb must be hermetically closed against a possible invader; or that invader must be met in the vagina by a disarming force, in other words, a substance which will sterilise the sperm and render it

innocuous; or the semen, though discharged from the male organ, must not reach the vagina at all. Or, finally, we may make assurance doubly sure by interposing more than *one* such obstacle between sperm and ovum, as an engine may carry two types of brake, either of which may conceivably fail, but both of which, if simultaneously applied, will scarcely fail at the same moment.

The closing of the womb against the entrance of the sperm may be effected by a small protective appliance known as the check pessary. This, which may be obtained through any high-class chemist, consists of a domed cap of soft, pliable rubber, with a strong rubber rim—the latter either solid or, preferably, pneumatic—and can be placed in position in a few seconds by the wearer herself. In order that the pessary may be easily inserted, it should first be lubricated with soapy water, a bland, non-irritant soap being essential for the purpose; it must then be pushed up the vaginal canal, with its convex side turned outwards, until it covers the neck of the womb as a thimble covers a finger; the rim has to be carefully fixed and adjusted, as a cap is adjusted to a head. There is no difficulty, danger or pain whatever about this manipulation, and once the appliance is in position, it will remain there quite securely until removed by the wearer. The important point to make sure of is that the cap fits exactly over the neck of the womb, being neither too large nor too small; for in the former case some sperm may slip through, and in the latter it will be impossible to fix it at all. This appliance is made in three sizes, and the average woman will probably find the medium size suitable for her requirements. Before insertion, the pessary should be carefully examined as to its entire freedom from fissures or tiny holes, through which a sperm might enter; the dome should be high—not flat—and the rim must be

absolutely smooth inside. The cap should not be introduced just before union takes place, but at any time during the evening; once adjusted, its presence will not be felt, and may pass out of the wearer's consciousness, while her husband will not know that it is there unless he has been expressly informed.

Of course the pessary must not be removed immediately after intercourse, nor is it wise that it should be taken out the next morning; for the male sperm retains its vitality and fertilising power for days after its ejection into the vagina, and to remove the safeguard against its entrance while one of the myriads ejected may lurk in the antechamber of the womb is to court failure. If no discomfort is felt—and none should be where care has been used to obtain the correct size and to adjust it accurately—there is no reason why the cap should be taken out at all, save during the monthly period; in any case it had better be left in position for some days after intercourse has taken place. When removed, it should be thoroughly well washed and disinfected, and kept in water until used again; this will prolong the "life" of the rubber, keeping it supple and preventing cracks.

Where the cap has been carefully fitted over the neck of the womb, and the rim so pressed home as to secure it against dislocation—and this, we repeat, is easy—there should be no fear of the invader reaching the citadel, however his kind may swarm in the precincts. But, in the spirit of "safety first," it may be well to take measures for so disarming the invading force as to render it incapable of mischief even if some unit should, against all likelihood, slip through. This object may be achieved by introducing into the vagina, a few minutes before union, one of the cone-shaped soluble pessaries, containing quinine mixed with cocoa butter, which may be readily obtained through the chemist.

When the pessary melts, as it quickly does, the quinine is set free, and sterilises the male sperm, which thus loses its capacity to fertilise the ovum. Those who take exception to the characteristic smell of cocoa butter, may, instead of using the quinine pessary, insert a small wet sponge saturated with olive oil soap; they may also have recourse to a douche with a mixture either of vinegar and water in equal parts, or of salt and water, both of which have sterilising properties. But, apart from what we have already said about douching, the quinine confers the greater immunity, and is therefore to be preferred. Where *both* the rubber cap and the soluble pessary are used, it is in the highest degree unlikely that conception should result.

There may, however, be cases where a wife entertains an insuperable repugnance to using any appliance, or is troubled by an unconquerable apprehension that if once the seminal discharge has reached her organism, some particularly energetic sperm may elude all measures of vigilance that can be devised. The repugnance to which we refer is as a rule merely a prejudice against the idea of introducing any "foreign substance" into the body, and if this prejudice can once be overcome, experience will soon show how easy and unobjectionable this method is, and how simply it may be applied; we strongly advise, therefore, that this protective device be at least given a trial. With fear, on the other hand, however unreasonable—or just because of its unreasonableness—it is impossible to argue, and if every union is poisoned for the wife by the dread that nothing may be of any avail if once the semen enters the vagina, it will clearly be imperative to have recourse to a method which will entirely preclude that possibility. This will consist of the use of a sheath of thin rubber, which is drawn over the male organ so as to cover it completely during intercourse, thus prevent-

ing the seminal fluid from touching the woman at all.

The drawback urged against the use of the sheath in conjugal intercourse is that its presence takes away from that perfect closeness of contact which is, of course, the ideal to be desired; and husbands are, as a rule, somewhat reluctant to adopt this method. The answer is that it is surely better to content oneself with something a shade less than the ideal rather than that one partner should be haunted by a fear which, whether well founded or not, will make union repellent to her; and also, that while some sheaths are of so substantial a texture as to deaden sensibility, the best grades are not open to this objection, being so fine as to make themselves little, if at all, felt by the wearer. Nor, if a first-class article be used, need there be any fear of this delicate envelope being ruptured, and the object of its use frustrated; all that is needed is gentleness and care in effecting an *easy* entrance, which will not unduly strain the fabric. If union is preceded—as it always should be—by wooing, the physiological conditions so induced will facilitate this;* nature, however, may almost always be with advantage assisted by means of a lubricant sparingly applied.

The removal of the sheath after use will present no difficulty, and may be effected with perfect cleanliness without getting out of bed, if a moistened flannel be kept within reach. Next morning it should be thoroughly well washed, dried and powdered on both sides, and rolled up evenly for future use. Before serving again it must, of course, be carefully examined, lest there should be the tiniest flaw or perforation: the tendency of all rubber to perish has also to be borne in mind. If double security is desired, the use of the sheath

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* See Chapter VI., p. 74.

may be combined with that of the soluble quinine pessary; the simultaneous failure of both is hardly within the range of possibilities to be taken into account.

It may be stated in passing that there has been exceedingly little development in methods of prevention for a generation past; the rubber pessary, the soluble pessary, and of course the sheath, were all known and recommended more than thirty years ago, though there may have been improvements in manufacturing processes, such as the substitution of a pneumatic for a solid rim to the rubber cap. We repeat that no single method is infallible, just as no human device of any kind can be pronounced infallible; but taking, as we must take, probability as the guide of life, we have no hesitation in saying that these are the methods, harmless to the users, which, when properly applied, promise all the safety we are entitled to expect. The great and real danger arises from the human factor—from carelessness, impatience, a sliding into easy ways, a comfortable assurance that just this once precautions may be relaxed; when "just this once" may be the invader's opportunity. That is how most accidents happen in this or any other field; it is the failure of the human factor that has to be chiefly guarded against if parentage is to be a voluntary act, not a hap and hazard.

We cannot close this chapter without addressing to the reader a final word of advice or admonition, as the case may be. Having expressed ourselves quite candidly upon the responsibility of having children, we desire to be fully as emphatic in pointing out the responsibility incurred by couples who avoid having the children they could afford.

In a world more economically sane and sexually enlightened, there would, we are sure, be no extravagantly large families; but neither, on the other hand,

would there be any marriages designedly kept sterile, save for compelling reasons of health. There have always been childless marriages that were happy and mutually joy-giving; but normally it is the union blessed with children that holds the greatest and purest happiness in store for men and women.

Those who deprive themselves of offspring and the world of citizens for the miserable reason that they want to have what is called "a good time"—for the sake of being able to spend more on clothes and amusements—or because "having babies is such a bore, and we shouldn't know what to do with one," are assuredly choosing the worse and not the better part; and by giving rein to their selfishness and frivolity now they are preparing for themselves many fruitless regrets in days to come, with the prospect of an empty and lonely old age. The tarnished recollections of long-dead pleasures and indulgences will prove a singularly poor compensation for the sons and daughters to whom, in sheer egoism, they denied life and light, love and laughter, healthful joys and the benison of tears.

So fundamental an instinct as that of parenthood is not to be thwarted with impunity; and though it be true that children may

> wound us and surprise
> Even to utter death, till we at last
> Turn from a face to flowers,

yet even that risk is worth the taking in order to have known the blessedness of ministering to helpless little mortals, spending the treasure of unselfish love upon them, teaching them their first words, and guiding their first uncertain steps.

The man or woman who imagines that our lot on earth holds anything better, anything as good as this, is wholly and disastrously mistaken; and of those who purposely go through life childless, lest they should have

to forego some luxury, or stop for awhile in the breathless pursuit of pleasure, we may sorrowfully say that verily they have their reward.

Wise Wedlock will assuredly, wherever possible, find its crown and glory in the mothering and fathering of children; nor will the truth ever be superseded which Burns expressed in the homely lines:—

> To make a happy fire-side clime
> To weans and wife,
> That's the true pathos and sublime
> Of human life.

CHAPTER XII.

BON VOYAGE!

> It might not be so very difficult to get quite young people to understand that even though they may have to contend with some superfluity of passion in early years, yet the most deeply-rooted desire within them will probably in the end point to a permanent union with one mate; and that towards this end they must be prepared to use self-control against the aimless straying of their passions, and patience and tenderness towards the realisation of the union when the time comes. Probably most youths and girls, at the age of romance, would easily appreciate this position; and it would bring to them a much more effective and natural idea of the sacredness of Marriage than they ever get from the artificial thunder of the Church and the State on the subject.
>
> EDWARD CARPENTER.

In the preceding chapters we have more than once likened marriage to a voyage jointly undertaken by two exceedingly inexperienced navigators, binding themselves for a lifelong expedition, with little knowledge of the course they will have to sail or the storms they will have to weather, little knowledge of the elements of seamanship, little knowledge, above all, of either themselves or each other. Our office has been to act partly as pilot, partly as instructor, and now, as we approach the end of our task, there are certain things we want to say in conclusion, by way of *envoy* and valediction.

Marriage as an institution, and viewed as the only permissible form of sex-relationship, is to-day passing through an intensely critical period. The merely dogmatic sanction of matrimony, with the corresponding

dogmatic condemnation of any other form of union, makes a less powerful appeal to the present age than to almost any that has preceded it. Many young people, not by any means vicious or wanton, but open-eyed and open-minded, find themselves so little impressed with a large proportion of marriages in the concrete which have come under their observation that they are not attracted by the prospect of a like fate in store for themselves. Youth, generous and romantic, aspires after something—no matter how vaguely apprehended—that seems to it more instinct with romance and generosity than the average *ménage,* nor is this very much to be wondered at.

We are, nevertheless, well assured that monogamy represents the highest and truest ideal for the race, and our object has been to point to some of the main causes of its failure where it has failed, showing how those causes, and their effect, may be avoided. There are, of course, many marriages entered into in blind haste and at the behest of passion which can only be described, in Mr. Shaw's phrase, as "irrational knots" —knots which should never have been tied, and which a humaner law would sever with one clean cut; but there are many more which have only got into a tangle, a source of severe discomfort and unhappiness while unresolved, but by no means past resolving. Whether some future generation will look more tolerantly than ours on unions less binding than matrimony, it is not for us to say; what we are quite certain of is that only in permanent marriage is the most abiding as well as the highest happiness to be found for men and women, and what we have attempted to do has been to point the way more clearly to the attainment of such happiness.

For this purpose it has been necessary to discuss the physical side of the marriage relation at greater length

and with greater frankness than is customary. We have taken this course because we are convinced that the main cause of marital misunderstandings, estrangements and disasters is to be found in the widespread ignorance of important and fundamental facts of sex, which ought to be known to all who are married or who contemplate marriage. This ignorance has in the past been carefully and deliberately fostered from a mistaken conception of sex as something impure and shameful; and in trying to disperse this harmful ignorance by the use of the plainest, cleanest language at our command, we modestly but firmly claim to have rendered a service alike to good sense and good morals.

Those who have read our exposition with care and cleanliness of mind will be less liable—to say the least—to make shipwreck of their lives in marriage than those who have been brought up on genteel concealments, prevarications and half-truths concerning matters of such importance that nothing short of the whole truth will enable men and women to steer their barque aright. It has been said that to understand all is to forgive all; it would be even truer to say that husbands and wives who understand each other will seldom have anything very grave to forgive each other. They will be saved the mood of angry despair in which a character in a modern play—a disillusioned young wife—exclaims: "Marriage is a hateful, wretched institution." To which a shrewd elderly relative, a lawyer with abundant experience of "matrimonial causes," makes the wise retort: "Marriage is not a hateful, wretched institution. On the contrary, I am prepared to affirm that marriage is a perfect institution—worked by imperfect creatures." Human nature will always be imperfect; but we need not make the successful working of the institution more difficult by a conspiracy of silence, by withholding vital information which would prevent so many catastrophes.

We have simply done our best to dispel this thick fog of ignorance, the cause of unnumbered collisions and tragedies of the matrimonial ocean.

The physical side of marriage does not, of course, cover the whole of the subject, nor have we confined ourselves to this aspect of it; but a knowledge of the elements of sex physiology and hygiene constitutes so indispensable a part of the equipment for Wise Wedlock that where this is lacking the whole relationship will inevitably suffer. The root is not the flower; but there can be no flower, still less can there be any fruit, where the root is withered or poisoned.

Next to such knowledge as we have striven to impart, there is great need of what Edward Carpenter calls "the recognition in marriage itself of a freer, more companionable and less pettily exclusive relationship"; on this aspect of the subject, too, we have tried to lay the stress its importance requires. Few things have rendered marriage such a disheartening spectacle to discerning onlookers, such a soul-destroying slavery to many women and not a few men, as the clutching egoism of a partner whose ignoble lust of possession would be content with nothing less than the absolute ownership of, and domination over, an immortal soul, temporarily clothed in a mortal but exquisitely sensitive body.

In this respect we have learned much, advanced much, within living memory, though more is still to be learned, many more steps forward remain to be taken. We must not tire of insisting that there is an inner, ultimate self-owning which cannot be surrendered or usurped without calamitous results; a sanctuary of soul and body which the nearest may not enter uninvited; that there appertains to each individual an inalienable freedom of the spirit which must be loyally recognised and mutually accepted if the closest and truest intimacy

is to be attained in marriage. In words which have lost neither their music nor their wisdom, and which truly describe what should be the relations of men and women :—

> Not like to like, but like in difference,
> Yet in the long years liker must they grow,
> The man be more of woman, she of man;
> He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
> Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world,
> She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
> Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind.
>
> And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
> Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,
> Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be;
> Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,
> Distinct in individualities,
> But like each other ev'n as those who love.
>
> Then comes the statelier Eden back to men;
> Then spring the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
> Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
> May these things be!

And now the pilot, his office discharged, steps down the side of the vessel, desiring for those he leaves on board clear skies and favouring winds and a prosperous voyage, even to the Isles of the Blest.

FINIS.

"Wise Wedlock" Advisory Bureau.

WE have very great pleasure in announcing that Dr. G. Courtenay Beale, the author of "WISE WEDLOCK" and "REALITIES OF MARRIAGE," has consented, in the interests of his thousands of readers, to deal with and answer correspondence touching any aspect of the marriage relation.

We need hardly point out the immense boon which is thus being offered to multitudes of perplexed and suffering men and women; such will now be able to obtain the individual, frank, confidential and sympathetic advice of an unquestioned expert, who will do his best to solve their conjugal problems, disentangle their matrimonial knots, and point the road to married happiness.

Avail yourself of this unique offer; write fully and candidly, enclosing cheque or P.O. for 7/6, to the "'Wise Wedlock' Advisory Bureau," c/o HEALTH PROMOTION, LTD., 19/21, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, and you will receive in due course Dr. G. Courtenay Beale's signed reply in plain sealed envelope.

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